C. W. Brenbaker
Dayton. Ohio.
March 14-23

ST. MARK'S LIFE OF JESUS

To the Memory of

JOHN DAVID McCLURE

Who taught me (amongst other lessons) to

use my Greek Testament

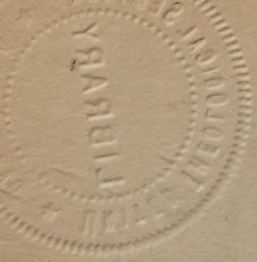
ST. MARK'S LIFE OF JESUS

THEODORE H. ROBINSON,
M.A. (Camb.), D.D. (Lond.)
University College, Cardiff

With Foreword by
Prof JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., D.Litt.
United Free Church College, Glasgow
Author of *The New Testament: A New Translation*, etc.

LIBRARY OF
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
BS
2585.3 .R6
68.130
c.2.

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



First published July, 1922
Second impression November, 1922

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY HEADLEY BROTHERS,
18, DEVONSHIRE STREET, E.C.2 ; AND ASHFORD, KENT.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	FOREWORD - - - -	7
I	THE PREPARATION - - - - Mark i. 1-16.	9
II	THE GALILEAN MINISTRY - - Mark i. 16-45.	19
III	PHARISAIC HOSTILITY - - - Mark ii. 1—iii. 6.	35
IV	THE RESULTS OF PHARISAIC HOSTILITY - - - - - Mark iii. 7—iv. 41.	50
V	THE QUEST OF PRIVACY - - - Mark v. 1—viii. 26.	64
VI	THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM - Mark viii. 27—xi. 11.	81
VII	JESUS IN JERUSALEM - - - Mark xi. 12—xiii. 37.	98
VIII	THE END—AND THE BEGINNING - Mark xiv. 1—xvi. 8.	113
APPENDIX.	A NOTE ON MIRACLES - -	131

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
APR 2 - 1967

FOREWORD

It is not the smallest merit of Dr. Robinson's little book that his pages send us back to the Gospel of Mark itself; they are to be read with Mark's story of Jesus, not instead of it. You may say that a gospel tells its own story; why add comment or explanation? But, although the plain words of the gospel are intelligible enough, they need to be explained, for the writer could take much for granted that we cannot supply, and those who read his tale originally were familiar with a life that has passed away. This gospel was written nearly nineteen hundred years ago, in another language, and for people of a very different environment to ours. The end of a book like Dr. Robinson's is to put us as far as possible in the same position as those to whom this gospel first came.

"Objects, even as they are great, thereby
Do come within the range of humblest eyes";

and this gospel, though little in size, is one of the great books of the world; it is within the range of our intelligence, but we need to be put in the proper focus for seeing it. This, I think, Dr. Robinson has succeeded in doing. He has done us the great service of supplying our minds with the needful historical appreciation of the period. The result is that the life of Jesus as Mark describes it becomes more real for us, and so more wonderful than ever. Such is the effect which Dr. Robinson's pages produce, and we cannot be too grateful to him for using his scholarship in order to show us how to look back and also to look up to the great Object of St. Mark's gospel.

James Moffatt.

Chapter I

THE PREPARATION (Mark i. 1-16)

Jesus is the centre of the religious history of the human race. He is the supreme revelation of God to man. There have been other great teachers, who have told men of God, and helped them to draw near to Him. But Jesus is different from all the rest. Where the others have had a partial revelation (and sometimes a very partial one) to give, Jesus has given us all of God. It may be true that there is still much to learn,—that may be more than admitted; it may be claimed. The revelation of God did not cease with the first Christian generation. It has been continuous, and to-day we ought to know more of God than any age has done since Jesus left the world. But there is now a difference. There can be no fuller revelation *than* Jesus; there is a constantly developing revelation *of* Jesus. What more of God we may know than our fathers did, we may know of and in and through Jesus Himself. He is the ultimate message of God to humanity.

But this does not mean that Jesus came into the world without preparation. He was no lightning flash suddenly leaping from the darkness and sweeping across the sky. There was historically in Israel (and we may well believe, in other peoples too, for all religions find in Him the perfect form of whatever truth they possess) a twilight and a dawn before the sunrise. That is the meaning of the Old Testament, and that is the reason why it rightly forms part of our Bible. It is the story of the way in which Israel was

gradually brought to the point when the revelation in Jesus would have a meaning as it could have a meaning nowhere else.

This becomes obvious when we consider the fundamental assumptions of the life and teaching of Jesus. There were certain things which Jesus never insisted upon, not because they were not true, but because nobody about Him doubted them. Whilst there was very much in which He was at variance with the religious teachers of His day, in these things He was at one with them. There was no argument about them, and there is no record of Jesus having preached about them. He simply took them for granted. Two points stand out in this connection. The first is the doctrine that there is only one God—what we call Monotheism. Jesus was born into a people and a world which believed that there was only one God and that there never had been and never would be more than one. He never condemned polytheism or idolatry, as His followers had to do after Him. His hearers, enemies as well as friends, were as thoroughly monotheistic in doctrine as He was Himself. This, at least, He was able to assume. And, further, the Jew believed that God was righteous, and that He demanded righteousness of men. Jesus frequently was in conflict with His contemporaries as to what real righteousness was, but there was no question of the necessarily upright and pure character of God. He sometimes had to tell people that they were wrong in their views of the kind of morality that God required ; he never had to rebuke them for believing that God was immoral. There is no record of His denouncing the more flagrant forms of sinful act, though so much of His time was spent with the publicans and sinners. Those that He attacked were of a subtler kind, only possible where men believe in the moral nature of God. This He was able to assume.

We, too, assume these two things. We take it for granted that there is only one God, and that He is supremely righteous. These doctrines are woven into the fabric of our theology by centuries of Christian teaching. And we forget that when Jesus came into the world, the Jew was the only person who held or who ever had held these doctrines as a part of his religious faith. Philosophers might agree, but philosophy was not religion. On the contrary the philosopher often despised religion because of its superstition and immorality. His attitude was usually one of contemptuous tolerance. We hear so much (and rightly) of the beauty and truth of Greek thought that we are apt to forget that this high standard of thought and conduct was only for the few, and the great mass of mankind wallowed in a degrading polytheism which in many cases was not far above mere animism. And we need to remember this if we are to understand why Jesus was a Jew.

This unique religious position of the Jew was the result of a process which had lasted many centuries. In early days Israel had stood no higher than her neighbours in the scale of spiritual development Like them she had believed in the existence of a number of gods, though, again like them, she had recognised that there was one " the Lord, the God of Israel " who stood in a special relation to her. But the conquest of Canaan had introduced her to a multitude of other gods, who were known under the general name of " Baals." Similar in character to the God whom Israel had learnt to know at Sinai, they yet differed in being gods of the agricultural life, and it was only natural that Israel should, on entering this stage of civilisation, tend to adopt gods who, presumably, had long been concerned therewith. Even in the days of Hosea it could be said that Israel did not know that it was her own God who had given her her corn and her wine and her oil.

But in the main she seems to have learnt by bitter experience in the days of the Judges, that her only hope of existence lay in faithfulness to her own God. Scattered and isolated as the tribes were amongst the Canaanites, their only bond of union was their religion. It was not an arbitrary vindictiveness which ordained that as soon as they forsook their God and worshipped the Baals, they fell under the power of some foreign oppressor Alone each tribe was weak; it was only when they stood together that they were able to make headway or even to hold their ground. Every judge came to the rescue of his people in the name of the national God, and it was this appeal alone which gave them the strength they needed. So it came to pass that by the time of David southern Israel, at least, had learnt her lesson, and would not again turn to the gods of the land.

But the first effects of this lesson were imperfect Israel realised that she must worship her own God, but she confounded Him with the Baals, ascribed to Him their characteristics, and offered to Him the type of worship proper to them. As is always the case with the normally developing religion of an agricultural people, such worship was almost entirely devoid of moral content. There is only too much reason to believe that early Israel believed that God might demand human sacrifice of His people, and that religious immorality was a recognised mode of worship. A further lesson had to be laid on the heart of Israel.

This was the truth of the righteousness of God. The idea is so familiar to us that it is very difficult to realise that when Amos first propounded the doctrine, it must have struck a large number of his hearers as a monstrous and revolutionary innovation in religious thinking. But as a matter of fact, the great majority of the world's creeds have offered men gods who had little or no ethical value. In ancient Greece or modern

India there is hardly a vice or crime that does not find some sort of regular religious sanction. And when Jesus came into the world, Judaism was the only religion (as distinct from philosophy) in existence which laid it down clearly and emphatically that God is good, and demands goodness from men.

This was the lesson that the prophets had to bring home to Israel. From the time of Amos, possibly from that of Elijah, that group of inspired men whose words have come down to us in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament steadily drove home this new message. And as time went on, there was associated with it another doctrine, which seems to have been a deduction from the experience of the Exile, namely the truth that there is only one God. It is only in such men as the prophets of the period of the Exile or shortly before it that we have the clear statement of this truth. Israel did at last discover that there was only one God. Her God was not merely different from His rivals in His moral character; He stood alone, for "All the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens."

Thus when at the end of the sixth century B.C. Israel begun to reconstruct her national life, she did so as a Church with an absolutely unique faith. Her experiences and sufferings during the next three centuries and a half brought to the front and developed an old doctrine, that of the coming Messiah—the "Christ," closely bound up with the belief in a great day of the Lord which should see Israel free and triumphant, the mistress of the world. At the same time there grew up what many other nations had held before Israel, a doctrine of the future life which made it possible for the righteous at any rate, to look forward to a life of permanent communion with God. Both doctrines seem to have won their hold on Israel as a result of the successful revolt of the Maccabbean princes. Time passed,

Israel's freedom slipped from her with the coming of the Roman power into Asia, and again there arose as in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, the passionate longing for the Christ. All was ready for Him, and He came. The welcome He received, the fresh revelation of God's purpose and the new conception of the Kingdom of God are the theme of the "Gospel" of Mark.

All this spiritual pilgrimage is in a sense summed up in John the Baptist. He it was who made the immediate preparation for the Christ. Mark has but little to say about him; he receives far more attention from the other evangelists. Mark does, however, tell us two things. One is that he came preaching the baptism of repentance to the remission of sins, and the other is that he definitely regarded himself as the predecessor of some one unspeakably greater than himself. Baptism, with its inevitable symbolism of cleansing, was a rite familiar to the Jews. It was one, at least, of the forms prescribed on the admission of a proselyte from the heathen world. That is to say, it was a rite of initiation, and it would seem that in view of the imminence of the Christ, John was preparing an Israel within Israel which should receive, follow and enthrone Him. Very striking is the stress laid on moral purity. If a man had sins to confess, he must confess them at his baptism. On the other hand, we learn from Josephus that if men could honestly state that they had no sins unconfessed, but were already wholly dedicated to the service of God, John was willing to receive and to baptise them. The main point was secured, men had no longer sins on their conscience which had not been confessed and "remitted." They were fit for the coming of the Christ.

What John has to say of Him also is significant. There will be points in which He will be like His forerunner, but more in which He will differ from Him. The newcomer will baptise, but His baptism will be

of an entirely different kind. He will baptise with the Holy Spirit. Here again is a conception which appears to owe its origin to the prophets of early Israel. The appearance of psychological phenomena which men do not understand is, in the East, likely to be put down to a "breathing." If a man falls into a condition which he recognises as abnormal, and for which he cannot account, he says that someone has "breathed" upon him—generally someone who is more than human. The earlier prophets, men of the type of King Saul, used to exhibit strange behaviour, which they could not even themselves explain on ordinary grounds, and men readily grew to believe that the God of Israel had "breathed" into them. So the condition was attributed to this breath of God. Sometimes the manifestations were good, sometimes obviously bad—an instance of the latter is the evil spirit from the Lord which troubled Saul,—but in ages when men did not realise the moral character of God, this caused no difficulty to their minds. As time went on, however, it was felt that God could not be the source of such of these manifestations as were clearly baneful, and men began to think of them as being due to evil "breaths," personified at length into demons. Such "breaths" were called "evil" or "unclean" spirits. But, on the other hand, there still remained phenomena of this kind on record which could only be ascribed in the last resort to God Himself, and these were held to be produced by a "Holy" breath or "Spirit."

The effect of the Spirit was to change the whole character and being. Saul "became another man" when the first access of this Spirit fell upon him. With the enhanced and aggressive conception of the moral holiness of God, it is clear that there will be some close connection between baptism by water and baptism by the Holy Spirit. But one is ritual, or at best symbolic, the other is actual and permanent. In other

words, what John was doing was an evanescent picture of the transcendent reality which the Christ was to bring into the life of man.

And Jesus, too, came to be baptised. Yet His experience was different from that of others—as far as our records go. To Him there came a special manifestation. He saw the sky torn open, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on Him, and heard a voice from above telling Him of His peculiar appointment. It has been held, and with some reason, that this was the first intimation that Jesus had of His purpose and mission. This view accords with the whole presentation of Jesus in this Gospel from the psychological point of view. There were possibilities in Him which were unknown even to Himself until this moment. It was only when He recognised that He was possessed by the Spirit that His real ministry could begin. Till that point He had lived a life like that of other working men of His day, though we may believe that His sinless character involved a permanent and unbroken sense of communion between Himself and His Father. Possibly it is only here that He realised for the first time that the true relationship between man and God is best described as a filial one. There is, at any rate in this Gospel, nothing to show that He assumed any theological significance in the words that He heard.

But He had received the Spirit. And the first effect of that experience was to drive Him out from the haunts of men into the desert. The Evangelist uses a strong word " flung Him out." An intense and overmastering impulse, so strong as to be assignable to that new dominant personality which had taken hold of Him—this compelled Him to seek solitude. The mind of Israel had always peopled the desert with strange beings. There were not only the wild animals who seldom came near inhabited spots, and had their homes far away, there were also beings who were neither

animal nor human. These alike dealt with Him, some of them tempting Him, others supporting Him, though the suggestion is that the latter were not proper denizens of the desert, but special visitors.

Whatever may have been the detailed character of the experiences of Jesus in the desert—and Mark gives no description of them—the general purpose of this seclusion is quite clear. There had been a tremendous experience. There was a new vision of life. Everything was disturbed, the whole spirit in tumult and turmoil. The fresh life needed to be assimilated, and a revised orientation was imperative. There must be absence of interference, at any rate from the normal surroundings of life. There must be the winning of the new perspective. The vision must be translated into ordinary life, and there must be a steadying and recovery of balance. That which Jesus came to do could not be done in the heat of ecstacy. It required burning passion, but passion controlled by will. And this calming of spirit could only be achieved in such loneliness as that of the wilderness.

This process was spread over a period of six weeks or so, and Jesus returned. Mark does not say that He began to preach as soon as He came back. The point at which He started is indicated as being after the imprisonment of John. And it is worth noticing that at first His message was practically identical with that of His predecessor. It is a demand for repentance, in view of what was still to come. This is significant, because it illustrates a principle previously noted. There is a natural sequence and an orderly development in the revelation of God. Though the main message of Jesus was to be so extraordinary and revolutionary, yet it began with no startling novelty, but just where John left off. The transition was perfectly smooth. And yet it prepared the way for immeasurably greater things to come.

Questions on Chapter I

1. Do you think it possible to understand the New Testament without reference to the Old Testament ?
2. What do you think "Baptism by the Holy Spirit" meant ?
3. Other people confessed their sins when they were baptised. Do you think Jesus had any sins to confess ? If not, why was He baptised ?
4. In what ways do you think Jesus was tempted by Satan ? Is Satan a real person, or only a personified symbol of evil ?
5. Why do you think that Jesus refrained from preaching till after the imprisonment of John ?
6. Do you think that other people were aware of what was happening when the Holy Spirit came on Jesus ?

Chapter II

THE GALILEAN MINISTRY (Mark i. 16-45)

The Evangelist does not intend to give us a detailed biography of Jesus. Even if he had been able to secure the materials for such a work, the limits of space imposed on him by the custom of the times would have made such an attempt impossible. People always confined their books to a definite length, and though the Gospel of Mark does not quite attain to that length it would have far surpassed it if a detailed biography had been attempted. All that he has been able to do is to give his readers a series of pictures, and though in some parts of his work they are much more complete —especially towards the end—than at others, these pictures do not give us, and are not intended to give us, the whole course of events. Nevertheless the Gospel of Mark is one of the most successful pieces of historical writing that we have. For the function of the historian is less to chronicle the events themselves than to show how they are related, and how one thing followed after another. His work must, if it is to be of the best kind, have a dramatic element or quality, and must show the evolution of a particular idea or the gradual achievement of a single purpose. In other words, his record of facts (of course he cannot do without the facts) must show a perspective in estimating the importance of events for those which followed, and be based on a philosophy of history.

Judged by this standard, the Gospel of Mark must take a high place amongst the world's histories. Such facts as there are have been selected with a view to the

illustration of great principles and movements. In the main the writer's object is achieved by taking the active ministry of Jesus (and this is all he sets himself to write) and dividing it into periods. In each he gives either the salient events, or else selects certain items as illustrating the characteristic features of the whole. Where the march of events is slow, this is the more obvious; where it is rapid, his narrative becomes much fuller, inasmuch as these significant events crowd more closely on one another.

So in the first period we have an illustration of the kind of life that Jesus lived during the first months of His public work. It will be noted that there are no indications of time. We do not know from Mark how long this portion of the ministry of Jesus lasted. It is clear that some of the events described must have come fairly early, when the powers that were afterwards so manifest in Jesus were still unsuspected. And it is also clear that all are intended to be typical, and that all are dominated by a single idea, a single aspect of the nature and work of Jesus.

That idea is *authority*. This one word may be used to describe the whole section. It is manifested in different ways, as it was brought to bear on different kinds of objects and employed in different connections. But it is the same thing throughout, in whatever be its form—a concentration of overmastering personality.

This authority is first exhibited in the control which Jesus exercised over men (i. 16-20). As He was walking along the sea-shore, He saw certain people fishing. It is possible that He had known them and had intimate conversation with them on previous occasions. But there is no statement to this effect in the narrative, and we are left with at least the possibility that this was the first time He had come into close personal contact with them. Of course, as the successor of John, He will have been well known to them and to others

in Galilee. But up to this point He seems to have been alone, except in so far as people may have followed Him voluntarily. There was no attempt on His part to gather a group of disciples about Him and it was not till later that He set these and others apart for individual treatment.

It has been said that one of the characteristic words of this Gospel is the word "immediately." Mark does, as a matter of fact, use it some forty times—nearly half the total number of its occurrences in the whole New Testament. But it is always used with intent, as can be seen from the distribution of the word throughout the book. A quarter of the occasions on which he employs it are in this first chapter alone. And it is used here to indicate the effect which the command of Jesus produced on these two fishermen. No doubt that effect is in part to be attributed to the epigrammatic form which the command took. The phrase "fishers of men" would at once appeal to them, and they would feel that there was to be some connection, which now they might not be able to fathom, between their present lives and that which was being offered them. The difference lay in the character and quality of the game which they were to pursue. It was to be more difficult, yet more worth catching, and the appeal came home to them.

But there is surely more than this. Even granted that they had known Jesus before, and that the form which His invitation took appealed to them, there must have been something in the circumstances beyond these features. These were men—young, apparently, though certainly one of them was married—who got their living by catching fish. The fact that it was probably a poor living does not alter the case. Most of the people with whom Jesus dealt led what we should call a rather precarious existence. It was not much, but it was all they had, and they could not afford to lose it. Yet

they did lose it, or rather gave it away. There was a compulsion in the personal force of Jesus that left them no alternative. His authority dominated them.

So were called the first pair of the followers of Jesus. Within a few minutes the number was doubled. The same features characterised the call of James and John as had marked that of Simon and Andrew. Perhaps the command was more sudden and pressing in this second case. But one point emerges here which was not apparent in the first case. It would seem that Zebedee was a little above the rank and standing of the ordinary fisherman, whose only property was his boat and his net. He and his sons did not work alone; they had paid men working under them. It is possibly to suggest this higher grade that the "hired servants" are mentioned. There may also be another reason. One of the problems which have to be faced whenever a call to a big sacrifice comes, is that of other people who may be involved. A call to foreign missionary work will serve as an illustration. In most cases it is not the candidate for missionary service who stands to lose most; it is those who will be left behind.

It may fairly be assumed that Zebedee, who had two adult sons, was already advanced in years, and there might have been injustice and even cruelty in leaving him alone without that support for which an elderly father may fairly look from his children. It is clear, however, that as a matter of fact, he was not left helpless. He was in a position to afford paid help, and such help was actually there. Though his sons might surrender their livelihood, his was assured to him. With them, then, the problem above mentioned did not arise; they had only themselves to consider. The question does not appear to have arisen in the case of Simon and Andrew. It is true that the one was married but the East never thinks of the obligations of a husband in quite the same light as those of a son.

A Christian has been known in India to feel a " call " to leave all and go about the county as a holy man —practically a friar, and to have no compunction about leaving his children. He commended them to his European brethren (there were thirteen children), and was conscious of no dereliction of duty. But he would never have so left a Christian father or mother.

The cases of the father and the wife are not parallel to the oriental mind. But Zebedee was in no serious need, and, as to Simon and Andrew, the call of Jesus came, backed by that irresistible authority which His personality carried with it. They too left all and followed Him.

The next five incidents are all assigned to one period of twenty-four hours. This is typical of the method of the Evangelist. One day is enough to give a fair picture of the life of Jesus at this time, and one day is all that is given. A sabbath day is chosen. Perhaps the intention is to emphasise the activity of Jesus and the constant strain upon Him. He is a permanently busy person. If this were His Sabbath, His day of rest, what must the other six days of the week have been like ? One notices the recurrence of the word " immediately." The events crowd thickly upon one another ; there is no interval for repose or reflection. No sooner is one piece of work accomplished than another appears, and each is a case where there is need which cannot be neglected.

This is less obvious than elsewhere in the first of the paragraphs which deal with this day. Jesus goes into the synagogue and teaches (i. 21-22). And immediately the same characteristic which had appeared in His dealings with men makes its appearance. He teaches with authority. Yet the manifestation of authority is different. It is not this time the right to command ; it is the right to believe and to instruct. Matthew places the remark about the authority displayed in the

teaching of Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount And this discourse forms the best of all possible commentaries on the verse. Especially in Matt. v. 19-37 there is a series of contrasts between the old teaching and the new. These are lessons, each of which begins by reference to what has been said long ago—"thou shall not kill" and similar precepts. With these Jesus compares His own doctrine. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . . but *I* say unto you . . . ." Mark definitely contrasts this with the teaching of the Scribes. Their method is familiar to us from some of the Talmudic writings. For every utterance of theirs they felt it necessary to invoke some great name of the past, whose reputation and importance would assure those who listened that there was truth in what was said. But Jesus dared to cast all this tradition on one side, and claimed to be able to speak the truth without having to authenticate it by reference to saint or sage of the past. The expression of authority was in that "I." The teaching of the Scribes was based on knowledge; that of Jesus on inspiration. They had the right to teach because they knew the writings of men; Jesus had the right to teach because He was possessed of the Spirit of God.

There is no record in Mark of what the synagogue addresses of Jesus were like. Luke has an account of one of them, delivered in Nazareth, and there the element of authority is particularly pronounced. And whilst there is no reason to believe that at Capernaum He delivered an exposition of Is. lxi. similar to that ascribed to Him at Nazareth, it is clear that the same element of certainty and the same quality of knowledge were there. He had to teach man about God, and about God's relation to man. He had no need to refer to others for information or corroboration, for He knew more of God than any man ever had known.

The effect on the audience was electric. They were amazed. They had never heard anything like this before. A stir went through them, and there was a sense of the unusual which permeated the whole assembly. Their attention was first attracted, and then developed into excitement. And there was one person who was particularly effected. He was one of those unfortunates, whom their contemporaries believed to possessed with devils. This is no place to discuss the actual character of demoniacal possession as it appears in the Gospels and other documents of that time. It is enough to remark that many of the symptoms to-day would be ascribed to hysteria or even epilepsy or some other recognised disease. But at the same time it may be noted that the sufferer himself believed that his body was inhabited by unclean spirits, and this belief may in some measure have affected the outward manifestations of the disease.

Further, both in India and China, phenomena have been observed which are far closer to those described under this heading than any familiar to western nations which have a real Christian tradition behind them. And it is significant that these too are ascribed to the agency of evil spirits. As has been already noted, anything quite abnormal in the behaviour of people would be regarded as proving the presence of some invisible personality. Where the effects were obviously beneficial to the person affected or to those around, it was said that the agent was a "holy spirit" identified with the Breath of God Himself. But in other cases the spirit was clearly "unclean," "unholy," "evil," and the influence of Persian demonology in the centuries after the exile had led the Jews to join other nations in filling the world with such unseen beings.

For this possession was in the ancient world only too familiar a phenomenon. It was known to all the nations of the period, and everywhere there

were attempts to meet it. It was a disease of the soul, and just as there arose physicians whose business it was to relieve men of the ills that troubled their bodies, so there were many who claimed to have the power to expel these troublers of the Spirit. They were known as exorcists, and practised their art all over the ancient world. Their method was almost always the same. It was believed that control could be secured over the evil spirit by the knowledge of some name, either the name of one whom the spirit was bound to obey, or that of the spirit himself. Consequently he who would cast out an evil spirit set himself first of all to discover the name of the intruder. They were supposed to be known and listed, and the exorcist, in dealing with a patient, would start repeating the names of those who were familiar to him, until he reached the one who was actually concerned. Then, with various manifestations, of terror or rage, the spirit would leave the sufferer. When it was the name of a more powerful good agent that was sought, a similar procedure was followed, unless the practitioner had reason to believe that one particular name was omnipotent—if it could be found. Readers of the Acts of the Apostles will remember the occasion on which certain Jewish exorcists, all belonging to the same family, heard Paul casting out evil spirits in the name of Jesus, and adjured the spirit to come out of the man "in the name of Jesus whom Paul preacheth" with ludicrous results.

Except at special moments, such people may be assumed to have been normal. Probably the case referred to in this chapter was not a bad one, for in extreme instances the sufferer might be driven out from human society. This man was not merely permitted to mingle with his fellows, but to be present at the Sabbath synagogue services. But the sense of something unusual taking place, the nervous tension of the audience as a whole, the rustle, the whispering

and the general excitement which reigned over the whole synagogue aroused him to an outburst. The man cried out in recognition of the presence of a holy personality with a holy authority, as the fit came on him. But Jesus rebuked him with strong words—"Be muzzled! Come out of him!" A final outbreak, accompanied with violent contortions and writhings, such as were characteristic of this affection, and the man was quiet and sane.

The people were impressed, and more than impressed. It was not the mere fact of the cure, for these things were familiar enough to everyone. It was the manner of it. There was no hunting through a list of evil spirits—who the criminal was did not matter to this Exorcist. There was no appeal to a higher power whom the spirit must obey, whether he would or no. Jesus simply laid His commands on the thing, and it went. It was in His own person that He possessed the necessary power. As in the case of His teaching, though along different lines, He had exhibited a dominant personality. Once more He had shown His independence of all others; once more He had displayed His authority.

In yet another sphere the same authority was displayed on that day. This time it was exercised over disease (i. 29-34). At the close of the synagogue service Jesus, with the small company that he had now about Him, went to the house of one of the new followers. There was sickness. Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from fever. Now in the East the senior woman is the real head of the household and her absence was necessarily something upon which comment was natural if not inevitable. One is struck by the fact that, as Mark tells the story, there is no hint of the family asking Jesus to heal her. It is true that He had proved His authority over the demoniac. Yet possession, to the ancient mind, was not a disease at all, and there

was no reason why there should be any connection between the power to exorcise and the power to heal. It is Luke who substitutes the word "ask" for "tell" in Mark's narrative, apparently feeling that the character and powers of Jesus must have been well known, and that it was expected that He would exercise them on His patient. Of this there appears to be no indication whatever in Mark.

We are left with the feeling that it was, from their point of view, something of the nature of an accident that they should have mentioned it at all. Quite possibly the domestic arrangements were in some disorder, for though domestic arrangements in the households of the oriental peasantry are simple, they are capable of derangement. If this be the case, the remark about the hostess' illness will have had an apologetic element, as if to say "we are sorry that everything is not quite as it should be, but then the mistress of the house is ill." Jesus, however, simply took her hand and lifted her up. At once the fever left her, and she busied herself with those duties which her sickness had rendered for the time impossible. It is there that the miraculous element in the cure lies. Anyone who has suffered from malaria or influenza knows that the period of convalescence is often more trying than the disease itself. While the fever lasts, though there may be pain, there is a certain strength. There succeeds a lassitude, an irritability, a weakening of mind and will which is equally distressing to the convalescent and to those who are about him. Yet so great was the strength that came through the grasp of Jesus that this woman was able at once to perform her ordinary tasks—never light in the case of an oriental woman—and to wait on the family and their visitors. Jesus had proved His authority over disease.

It was the Sabbath, and all labour was impossible to devout Jews. But there was no law against rumour

and gossip, and the news of what had happened spread rapidly throughout Capernaum. And as soon as sunset made it permissible for work to be resumed, those who had sick friends and relatives brought the sufferers to the house where Jesus was known to be. The carrying of them was work in the technical sense, and it was for this reason that the delay was inevitable. The record of Mark is to the effect that the greater part of the population of the city tried to get into the house, bringing with them their sick. And he goes on to add that Jesus did as a matter of fact heal a great many of them. He does not say all.

Luke remarks that He laid His hands on every one of them, and so healed them. Matthew definitely states that He healed them all. But Mark, the common source of both the other narratives, leaves it to be inferred that there were some who were unable to secure what they had come for. Nor is this to be wondered at. All the sick in one of the largest cities of Palestine, gathered towards the door of one fisherman's cottage, choking the narrow streets for some distance round, could hardly, even in the course of a whole night have come one by one, been healed, and made their way out of the crush to allow others to take their place. Apart from any question of limitations on the side of Jesus, the physical conditions impel us to believe in the "many" rather than in the "all," and attribute the latter statement to an incorrect deduction on the part of the later Evangelists.

Not only the cure of the fever, but also the events of the synagogue service were by this time familiar to the people. Consequently the crowd who came for treatment included not only men and women suffering from a variety of forms of sickness, but also those who were subject to demoniacal possession. There is one significant note in Mark's record of their cure. Jesus insisted on silence on their part. The evangelist

states that this was because they knew who He was. Luke goes further and says that they knew He was the Messiah—again an obvious deduction from Mark's words. And this may well be the correct explanation. He had a great deal to do in the way of teaching people before He was ready to allow them to aim at setting Him on the Jewish throne. In particular He had to introduce an entirely new conception of the Messiahship, and this could only be achieved in the long run by personal contact. As a matter of fact, He never did explain or get people to understand it during His lifetime. Even those who knew Him best, and were most convinced of His mission, failed to realise what manner of Messiah He was, till after He had been taken from them. And a premature announcement of His Messiahship might have produced a popular movement in His favour which would have wrecked the real objects with which He came. There is, then, some reason in the statement given regarding His demand for silence on the part of those who might recognise Him. On the other hand we must never lose sight of the fact that we have to distinguish between the events and the interpretation of them which was adopted by the evangelists. It is very likely that in this instance they were right, but at the same time our minds must be left open for the possibility of other motives. It may, for instance, have been advisable from His point of view to have as little disturbance as possible. There were numerous other cases to be dealt with, and excessive excitement might make them harder. All the evidence goes to show that healing people was not an easy task for Jesus, and that every cure involved a spiritual and even a physical strain, which could, doubtless, be minimised by such precautions as these.

The last incident of this eventful twenty-four hours is contained in i. 35-39. It serves to illustrate the source of the authority of Jesus. In spite of the toil

and strain of the previous day, He was up before dawn and away to solitude. The time He had alone was spent in prayer. There is no reason to doubt—there is every reason to believe—that prayer was His normal habit, and that it was from this practice that He derived His strength. And special occasions demanded special measures. As the physical frame is restored in rest and sleep, the spiritual being of Jesus found its life in communion with His Father. Prayer was His rest, as it is the rest of all who are really in touch with God. Worn by the effects of the last day, He needed spiritual recuperation and peace. Situated as He was, solitude was essential to real prayer, and solitude was only to be attained by Him far from the dwellings of man. Mark gives no hint of the nature of His prayer, nor of the subjects which passed through His mind. Nor is it necessary. Prayer to Jesus was essentially communion, immediate intercourse between Himself and God. He was tired, exhausted, weary, so He prayed, and in His prayer He found that rest and strength which He needed for the continuance of His work.

This was clearly not understood by "Simon and those that were with Him." To them it was incomprehensible that Jesus should not have stayed to enjoy His popularity, and, perhaps, to continue His beneficent work of healing. They, therefore, followed Him, apparently expecting Him to return with them to Capernaum. He said nothing to them, as far as we know, about the way in which He had been engaged but explained that He had left Capernaum in order to wander through the smaller places of Galilee and preach.

The treatment of this verse (i. 38) by Luke (iv. 43) illustrates in a striking manner the way in which a theological meaning was read and may still be read into a phrase which originally has no such content. The latter evangelist, who exhibits from time to time

traces of a Johannine Christology, saw a deep significance underlying the word "came out." To him it suggested the whole fact and purpose of the Incarnation, and he substituted for it the phrase "I was sent." One need not deny the correctness of the theological position involved in this change of language to feel that here Mark is certainly right. The immediate purpose which Jesus had in view was to preach. The miracles of healing He had performed in Capernaum rendered that an impossible place for Him, at any rate for some time to come. He had these extraordinary powers, and He was unable to resist the appeal of suffering humanity. Consequently when an appeal of this kind was made to Him, He yielded to it, but always at the cost of His evangelical efficiency. Men did not want to hear Him, they wanted to be cured and to see Him cure others. We need not dwell on this point just here; we shall meet it again later in His life, when the situation had become more critical. But even here it is at work, and the conflict between the healing and the preaching sides of His ministry was already apparent to Him, if not to others.

This, as well as His indwelling authority, received further illustration on this tour (i. 40-45) At some point not exactly specified He was met by a leper, who pleaded with Him for healing. Leprosy was not an ordinary disease. It was practically incurable. It carried with it a taint which cut the sufferer off from all intercourse with his fellows. In itself it is a ghastly and horrible thing, as everyone who has even seen a leper will admit. But these additional features combined to render it the most terrible physical calamity known to the ancient world. The very touch of the leper was pollution. In what Jesus had already done there was no ground for this man to believe that Jesus either could or would heal him. Yet he seems to have realised that there were no material bounds to

the authority and the powers that were expressed in this unique and dominant personality. And Jesus healed him, and in healing him, incurred what to the mind of His day seemed to be the risk of infection. And certainly He exposed Himself to ceremonial pollution. This may partly have been the reason why He imposed silence on the man, but it is not the whole reason. That is clear from two points in the narrative, the treatment which Jesus gave the man and the sequel. As the patient was cured, an overpowering emotion showed itself in the face of Jesus. This was interpreted by those who saw it as an intense and passionate anger (it is a pity that the word is disguised in our English version, but there seems to be no doubt about it). Of course the interpretation may have been entirely wrong, and it may have been some other form of spiritual strain which produced the effect. Healing people always cost Jesus something. But if the evangelist is right thinking that Jesus was angry—and his view is borne out by the next phrase " flung him out,"—some explanation is required. The one that lies nearest to hand, if we consider Mark alone, is that Jesus had healed him almost against His will, knowing that this exercise of what He always regarded as one of His subordinate powers would militate against the success of His real purpose—to teach men about God and His kingdom. Jesus had in Himself the ability both to heal and to preach. But the conditions in which He was placed made it impossible for Him to exercise both powers. Not that the fault lay in Him, it lay in those about Him. They compelled Him to choose, and He chose, when He could, the greater and more important task. And this man, by His irresistible demand for help, had broken into that other task. There was one chance. If He could be got to go away quietly—right away to Jerusalem—no one would know, and He would be able to continue. So the man was sent there. But he

did not go. A great and wonderful thing had happened to him, and his instinct was to tell everyone about it and to enhance the fame and glory of Jesus. It need not be remarked that this, from the point of view of Jesus, was the worst thing he could have done. Once more, as in Capernaum so in the country, His reputation as a miraculous healer spread, and the crowds who gathered made effective evangelisation impossible. Jesus had to withdraw to desert places, where the sick could not reach Him, and even there people came to Him in numbers.

Two things have thus emerged from the account of the early work of Jesus in this chapter. Though it has come to us in "samples," we can see that His busy life was already affected by the conflict between the material and the spiritual, between what people wanted and what He desired to give them. This, however, is less prominent than the other feature of His life in these days—that all-powerful authority which characterised His work. It appears in His teaching, in His exorcism, and in His healing, both of the ordinary forms of sickness and of that most terrrible of all diseases, leprosy.

Questions on Chapter II

1. Do you believe in the existence of demons? If not, how do you account for the so-called demoniacal possession?
2. How far is a man or woman justified in disregarding family ties in order to take up Christian work, say on the Mission Field?
3. If the healing powers of Jesus were a hindrance to Him, why did He have them?
4. Do you believe in Medical Missions?
5. How far is a mere man justified in speaking and acting with "authority"?

Chapter III

PHARISAIC HOSTILITY (Mark ii. 1—iii. 6)

The last verse of this section is, from the historical point of view, one of the most amazing in the Gospels. It tells of how the Pharisees went and took counsel with the Herodians against Jesus as to how they might destroy Him. The combination of parties is one which would have appealed to their contemporaries as almost impossible. The Pharisees, as a party, had arisen in the troubled times of the middle of the second century B.C. It was their ancestors who had suffered and fought for the faith of their fathers at a time when the whole power of the Græco–Syrian empire was being employed for its destruction. They were firm believers, not only in the Law, but in the traditional interpretations of it. They were intensely patriotic, and were never content with a foreign yoke. They clung to a system of righteousness and moral purity which was in the strongest contrast to the average standards of their contemporaries, at any rate outside Israel. They believed in the Resurrection of the dead, and above all they longed for the coming of the Messiah who should restore the Kingdom again to Israel. Yet, when the Messiah came, they took counsel with the Herodians as to how they might destroy Him.

The Herodians were all that the Pharisees were not, and stood for all that was most opposed to the Pharisee ideal. Whether those mentioned here were simply members of a political party, or whether they were the officials of Herod's court is immaterial from the present point of view. They were pledged to the upholding

of a dynasty not merely foreign but Edomite.* It was maintained by the authority and the arms of Rome, and the Herodian court was a miniature picture of the imperial one, in its moral character as well as in its external appearance. With the politics, the ethics and the theology of the Pharisee the Herodian had not the slightest sympathy, yet it was to the Herodians that the Pharisees turned in order to destroy Jesus. Such an appeal requires an explanation, and can only be explained on the ground of the bitterest hostility. One can gauge the hatred of the Pharisees to Jesus—who was more at one with them than with any other party in the Jewish state—by the fact that they were ready to ally themselves with their deadliest opponents in order to get Him put out of the way.

The passage for study in connection with this chapter is the answer to the question "Why did the Pharisees hate Jesus so?" It is Mark's record of a series of five incidents, not necessarily closely connected in point of time, but illustrating the origin and growth of the feeling which had so profound an effect on the conditions of the work of Jesus. Each of these events has an extraordinary interest of its own, and there is much to be learnt from every one. But for our present purpose it is necessary that we should concentrate as far as possible on the features which explain the anger of the religious leaders of the people.

The first of these incidents (i. 1-12) is the cure of a paralysed person, who was brought to Jesus under unusual circumstances. The story is too familiar to need repetition, and numerous and valuable lessons as to the Divine methods in dealing with men have been drawn from it. But for our present purpose, the

* Edom had helped the Chaldeans to destroy Jerusalem in B.C. 586. Their action was never forgotten, and the feeling of the Jew for the Edomite may be illustrated from writings like the Book of Obadiah.

important element in the narrative is contained in the remarks made by Jesus to the sufferer, and their reception by the Scribes who were present. The first words of Jesus may be held to be a statement of fact —" thy sins have been forgiven." But when the statement was challenged, Jesus accepted the position, and definitely claimed, in His human capacity, to have the right to forgive sins. This, in the eyes of the Scribes, laid Him open to a charge of blasphemy, and possibly, assuming the traditional point of view, the charge could have been sustained.

Blasphemy is a question of words. If the idea lying behind the charge be analysed, it will be seen that in its simplest form the principle which Jesus assumed, can not merely be justified as harmless, but maintained as necessary. The claim of the traditionalists in language was that forgiveness is a divine attribute. The claim of Jesus was that it is also a human one. (This seems to be the import of the phrase " Son of Man " as here applied by Jesus to Himself.) True, it might be held that man can only forgive injuries done to himself, but, on the other hand, is not every sin in the last resort a crime against the human community as well as against God ? But the question at issue was not merely one of ideas, it was essentially one of words. Jesus had used—and insisted on using—language which was a violation of the rules of speech as recognised by the normal piety of the day.

This is a fresh example of the exercise of authority of Jesus. As long as it was applied to such harmless purposes (from the traditionalists' point of view) as casting out devils and healing lepers, there was no objection to it. But, in direct conflict with established tradition, it was another matter. For the attitude of Jesus was a direct claim to the authority to control, and, if He saw fit, to supersede the recognise conventions of language. Such a claim could not possibly be

conceded, without the surrender of the privileged position of the Scribes, for they, of all the Pharisaic party, were the guardians of the forms of speech. Jesus' words, to put the case mildly, shocked them.

Even had the Scribes been disposed to consider the possibility of Jesus being the Messiah, there were now clearly doubts in their minds. And these doubts were deepened into suspicion or something stronger by the next incident in the Gospel story (ii. 13-17). Again the narrative is very familiar, and again there is much interest and importance from other points of view that must be passsed over in such a study as this. The essence of the story in its historical bearing is the meal to which Jesus was invited, and the effect which it produced on the religious leaders of the people. There were members of the despised classes of publicans and sinners there, and in spite of that fact, Jesus did not hesitate to share the meal.

In order to appreciate the feeling of the Scribes, it is necessary to recall the oriental point of view on such matters. To us who live in the West, it is a matter of minor importance as to who sits with us at the table. In railway trains, hotels and eating houses we may meet with all the classes of people, and they may find themselves next to us. If a man does not understand the normal use of the implements we may be amused or object, and his conduct may in other ways arouse our dissatisfaction, but we should not be likely to refuse to share a table with him on the ground that he belonged to a class to whom we were opposed on political, religious or even moral grounds.

But this is not the case in the East. There—and this is not a matter of one country or of one people, but seems to be general over a great part of Asia—the common meal is the closest bond of association which exists. The most extreme example is perhaps the caste regulation of food as one sees it in India to-day.

It may be true that in certain educated circles the rigour of these rules is gradually relaxing, but the fact remains that they have a very strong hold on the great mass of the people. A Brahmin gardener, for instance, fell sick of dysentery. There was a hospital in the town, with a European doctor in charge, and he went there for treatment. The doctor prescribed and the medicine was prepared. The compounder was a Brahmin himself, but the old gardener was not sure on the point, and was determined to take no risks, so he refused to drink his medicine. He became rapidly worse, and it was clear that nothing but the medicine would save his life. He was told that the compounder, the only person who had handled his medicine, was a man of the highest caste, from whose hand anybody might take food or drink without pollution, but still declined to believe it. He realised his own danger, but felt that his caste purity was of more value than his life, and he died rather than endanger it. And even a comparatively enlightened Hindu, who would not enquire too closely as to the source of his food, might be unwilling to eat at the same table as one of lower spiritual rank than himself, at any rate in public. A similar importance attaches to the common meal amongst the Arabs, and the attitude of even the Bedawin to one who has eaten with them is familiar. It would be well if we could bear in mind this aspect of the common meal, when we meet at the communion service, and remember that not only is it a rite which helps us to get into closer relations with God, but should be also a strengthening of our human Christian fellowship.

With this oriental attitude towards the common meal in mind, we can understand something of the feeling with which the Pharisees and the Scribes saw Jesus eat with publicans and sinners. Let there be no doubt about the matter, the Pharisee was a far

more respectable person than the publican. We might well think twice before we introduced the latter into our homes; whatever we felt about the frankness or otherwise of the former, he would at least have violated no law of propriety or of ordinary morality. If Jesus had confined Himself to being about with these disreputable people or with preaching to them, the Pharisees might possibly have accorded a mild approval to His action—He would have been a useful missionary. Their feelings might not even have been deeply concerned if He had been content to share a roof with them. But He did more than this. He actually *ate* with them, and by so doing identified Himself with them in the closest manner in which it was possible for Him to do so. To realise their horror, one would have to imagine that of a seventeenth century Puritan on hearing that one who claimed to be a leader in religious things had identified himself with the cause of an actress of doubtful reputation.

There was a claim involved in the conduct of Jesus which the Pharisees almost certainly failed to appreciate. That was the claim to so transcendent a purity of character that He was incapable of pollution even by contact with the foulest. His goodness was very far from being of that negative type which abstains from wrongdoing, it was of that blazing aggressive kind which attacks all forms of evil and overcomes them by sheer weight of the moral personality which embodies it. This Jesus realised about Himself. His declaration that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, implies it. Jesus never put light for darkness or darkness for light. He never suggested that the publican and the sinner were living the right kind of lives. He implicitly condemned them—or rather their conduct—though, as far as we know He never "preached" to or at them. He realised that they

were lost, and said so, but that very fact involved an appeal to Him. He called them to Him because they needed Him. They may not have been conscious of their need, but He was. And with these people He had a chance. Whatever else they were, they were real. Human nature, raw and red, but Jesus could deal with human nature at its worst, provided only it were genuine. With the hollow, empty mask of the man to whom conduct was everything, the man who walked through life as a masquerade, with such men as the Pharisees, Jesus could do nothing. They gave Him no material on which to work.

The implicit claim of Jesus, then, was to this militant purity. But it was not that which appealed to His opponents the most. There was another, and one which to them was more obvious. Social convention said that these people with whom Jesus identified Himself, were unfit for polite and pious society. Jesus chose their company. That involved a claim to control, and, if He thought fit, to supersede all the social conventions of the people who felt that the true faith was with them. Doubt as to Jesus had passed into suspicion—and beyond it into condemnation.

This attitude was strengthened by the position Jesus adopted on the question of fasting (ii. 18-22). Here again it is necessary to see the facts through oriental eyes. To us in the West, fasting, the mere abstention from food, has comparatively little spiritual value. On the contrary, its principal effect on many of us is to produce a state of mind which it would be charitable to call irritability and not untruthful to call bad temper. Experience has shown us that to our temperament (and it is a matter of temperament and not of climate; the occidental finds fasting more dangerous spiritually in the East and in the tropics than in his own home) the practice is very far from being an elevating one. But that is not true of the East.

To this day, in the great religions of the East it is true that to abstain from food does help a man to rise from the circle of material things and to concentrate on the spiritual. It is a practice which is almost universal in the East, amongst all forms of faith, though the great Moslem fast of the month Ramadan is its most obvious example. And the wide spread of the practice points to experience of its value. It is throughout the East one of the regular ways in which man draws near to God. It is one of the recognised " means of grace."

Jesus was challenged because His disciples, in His company (and doubtless on His example) did not observe this practice. His reply was " Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them ? " Beneath the imagery which has many minor lights glancing through it, there lies the broad truth that as long as Jesus Himself was with them, the disciples did not need to fast because all that could be done for them by fasting was done by His presence and society. In other words, Jesus said in effect, " You condemn these men because they are neglecting the recognised means whereby man may get into touch with God. But they do not need these means. I am with them, and as long as they have Me they require no other medium between themselves and Him."

Such an attitude could not fail to arouse hostility. It is as if someone, posing as a great religious leader, were to come to us to-day and say, " You do not need any Christian services. You do not need prayer-meetings. You do not need to read your Bible. You do not even need to pray. All you need to do is to be with me, and with me you will find your way to the presence of God with clear light and unfaltering foot-step." Such a claim would appeal to us as dictated by supreme arrogance or else by supreme insight. In the state of mind to which the other incidents had reduced the Pharisees, the latter position was impossible. They

could not regard Him as a person supremely in the secrets of God. The result was that they were compelled to take the other view, and to see in Him one who made claims that no human being could possibly substantiate. In His own person He claimed the right to control, and, if He saw fit, to supersede the recognised means of grace.

The evangelist adds two short sayings of Jesus which may have been uttered at this point or may have been amongst those familiar floating remarks of His which the book-compilers used and inserted when and where they thought them most suitable. But even if the latter is the case, they bear in most illuminating fashion on this claim that was made by Jesus. One is that which is concerned with the new piece of cloth used to patch up an old garment, the other the metaphor of the old bottle bursting under the fermenting strain of the new wine. The point of both is the same. Any attempt to put a new spirit into an old institution will lead to disaster. What Jesus came into the world to bring was entirely fresh. The message that He had to deliver was such as man had never heard before. The revelation of God that He had to disclose was absolutely unique. It could not by any possibility be used in connection with the old forms and the old rites. Any attempt to combine the two would end in calamity. To try to reach God as Jesus declared Him through the means of grace that had suited bygone ages could only mean in the end the tearing and the bursting of those forms. If His faith were to find a suitable receptacle, it must be one especially made for it. His spirit could not clothe itself in a second-hand religion—one that had been used for another creed. The traditional ritual of a dying faith would perish utterly if He were to attempt to force the life of His Gospel into it. This new living thing must create its own body for its dwelling place, a body which could expand

and grow to meet the needs of the powers growing and expanding within it. In the meantime, those who were sharing in that life had Him, and they needed nothing else. He was the new bottle for them.

In dealing with language, social convention and the recognised means of grace, Jesus had been upon the outskirts of the Jewish faith. In the last two incidents, that of the disciples plucking the ears of corn (ii. 23-28) and that of the cure of the man with the withered hand (iii. 1-5) Jesus struck at no external or accidental feature of Jewish religion and practice, but at the very centre of Judaism, the Law itself. Nor was it a minor point or detail, it was no less than an item in the Decalogue over which the battle took place.

In the first case the collision was accidental—at least from the point of view of Jesus. His disciples plucked the ears of corn as they walked through the fields on the Sabbath, and, rubbing the ears between their hands to get rid of the husks, satisfied their hunger. It has been pointed out again and again that this did not involve the crime of stealing. On any other day their action would have been quite legitimate. But it was the Sabbath. Their plucking of the corn was a kind of reaping. Their rubbing of it was a kind of threshing. Their blowing away of the chaff was a kind of winnowing. Reaping, threshing and winnowing were all of them work, and as such could not be done on the Sabbath day. And this was one of the laws that might not be broken. In the early days of the Maccabean revolt the Jews had allowed themselves to be slaughtered without resistance rather than defend themselves on the Sabbath, and though the grim logic of events had compelled them to revise their view on this particular point, they could never forget the men who had died rather than surrender their loyalty to the strict letter of the law. Consequently mere cold letterpress is utterly inadequate to represent the screams

of horror and rage with which the Pharisees greeted the action of the disciples. "Look what they are doing!" "On the Sabbath!!" "Unlawful!!!" And the answer of Jesus is just as cool and humorous as the charge is furious and hysterical—"Have you never read what David and his companions did in extreme need and hunger? Why they even ate the Shew-bread! That is a thing which was unlawful, if you like—except, of course, for the priests." It is indeed difficult to reconcile much of David's conduct with the letter of the law! He, a man after God's own heart, had dared to violate the sanctity of the holy shrine and its bread, because of the greatness of his need. Could not some allowance be made for lesser men in like case? This was an argument addressed to the peculiar position and faith of the Pharisee, for his ideal Messiah was another David. But Jesus did not stop there; He went on to base His position on broader and more general lines. His outlook was a universal one. He had to think of the needs of all humanity. So whilst He did not disdain an "argumentum ad hominem," He at once gave also the deeper reason why the Law in this and similar instances might be broken. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

This law, then, to His mind, was one intended to meet the needs of humanity. It would be possible to dwell at some length on the advantages, physical, moral and spiritual, of the institution of the one day's rest in seven. It was not peculiar to the Jews, and, perhaps, did not originate with them, for the Babylonians, centuries before the Exodus, observed a similar lunar festival. But Jesus was not concerned with antiquarian or comparative research into the origin of the festival. As elsewhere in all non-essentials, He accepted the position of His contemporaries in His own people and

faith, and assumed that the Sabbath law was an illustration of the divine benevolence. If, so far from meeting the needs of humanity, it militated against their satisfaction its true purpose could be better fulfilled by disobeying it than by observing it. Above all, He, in His capacity as representative of all humanity—the "proper man"—had the right to decide when and under what conditions its observance would be harmful.

At the same time, looking on the matter from their own standpoint, the Pharisees were right. The action of the disciples was a breach of the law. And in that action Jesus was prepared to aid and abet them.

For, as they well saw, His words involved a claim far wider than any He had yet put forward. It was a claim to control, and if need be to supersede the very essence and centre of their thinking about God. It was their whole theology that was at stake. They looked for a Messiah who should establish the Law as the dominant influence in all human affairs, and here was this man—not yet recognised as the Messiah, it is true, but still exercising an enormous influence over people, who was prepared to throw the whole thing over, and substitute His own interpretation of human need for the authority of a divine ordinance.

Here the conflict might be described as accidental. It was none of Jesus' seeking. In the case of the man with the withered hand the subject of difference was the same, and the claim of Jesus was the same, but the incident sprang out of a deliberate challenge on the part of Jesus.

That is clear from the character of the trouble which Jesus had to cure. It was not a case of a sudden emergency. Under those circumstances allowance would be made even by the more rigid of the Puritan party. Acute disease might be treated on the Sabbath, and so might injury resulting from accident. But here the case is different. A sufferer from a chronic disease,

even in so large a place as Capernaum (and it is by no means clear that this incident took place in Capernaum) could without difficulty have found Jesus. Or, if He had noted the case and made up His mind to cure it, He Himself could have sought out the patient at any time. There was no hurry. If follows then that Jesus deliberately used this opportunity of bringing up a test case, in which the issue between Himself and the legalists could fairly be joined. And it is worthy of note that He took exactly the same ground as in the last instance—the prior claim of human need over against ritual demands.

The form in which the question is put by Him is significant. He states the issue as a decisive one. One must either do good or evil. One must either save life or kill. There is no middle course possible. To refrain from doing a possible good is to do positive harm. To hold aloof when there is an opportunity of service is to inflict an actual injury. It was characteristic of Jesus that He saw the alternatives of life in this clear-cut fashion. To Him there were no border line cases. Compromise was entirely foreign alike to His nature and to His teaching. To us, weighing carefully all possibilities and considerations, it frequently, nay, usually, seems that the margin of probability on the side of right is but a narrow one. Jesus saw life through a microscope, and the enlargement—which some would call exaggeration—gave Him the clear certainty as to which was the side of God and which the side of wrong. He weighed conflicting pros and cons not less accurately but more accurately than most of us, for His soul was nearer to God than ours often is, and He used a more delicately sensitive balance. To Him, with His sharp and emphatic moral vision, everything was either right or wrong, and with Him there was no hesitancy when once the main question was decided. As with Socrates, so with Jesus, to know the right was to do it. To watch

a man drown was to drown him; Jesus, at all costs, would take the plunge which should save him.

Here then was the issue as Jesus saw it. A sufferer was before him. He had the power to heal. It did not matter that the case was one which might be treated equally well on the following day; the demand was for immediate action. Situated as He was, Jesus might relieve pain or He might refrain. To refrain would be to give pain, and to give needless pain. There was only one course open to Him. The Sabbath was made for man, and it would be more truly kept by ministering to human need on the spot than by observing the mere letter of the Law. This was what was involved in the question that He put.

The reply, silence, was not unexpected by Him, and yet it gave Him the sting of anger. It was the insensibility of their minds that affected Him. He could see the ethical and spiritual issues so clearly, and they could not; they had not the sense. Their fault was supremely a moral stupidity, and His appeal to God-given common sense found no response in them. And so without a further word He healed the man, and, in so doing, sealed His own doom, at least with the Pharisaic party. He had outraged their sense of the propriety of language, He had broken through their social conventions, He had discarded the traditional means of grace, and now, not by accident, but in all deliberate purpose, He had denied the absolute validity of that law for which their fathers had fought and suffered and died, that Law which was their supreme glory and distinguishing mark of divine favour amongst the nations of the world, that Law which was the centre of all their thinking about God and of all their knowledge of God. Everything was gone. It was too much, and they went out to seek the co-operation of the Herodians, their bitterest enemies, in the destruction of one who should have fulfilled their highest ideals.

Questions on Chapter III

1. Can men forgive sins, other than offences committed against themselves ?
2. Is it possible safely to dispense with regular and organised means of entering into communion with God ?
3. " The better day, the better deed." Is this true ?
4. In the light of the attitude of Jesus towards the Sabbath, what should be our view of Sunday observance ?
5. Where were the Pharisees wrong in their attitude towards Jesus ?
6. If Jesus were to come to-day in a form as unexpected as that in which He actually appeared, and if He were to make the same claims as He then did, would you recognise Him ? If so, how do you think you would know Him ?

Chapter IV

THE RESULTS OF PHARISAIC HOSTILITY

(Mark iii. 7—iv. 41)

Whilst the attempt of the Pharisees to put Jesus out of the way by means of the secular arm must necessarily have demanded some time for its execution, its effects on His plans and methods became apparent almost immediately. His life was no longer safe. Though the end might be delayed, it was now certain, and it was only a question of time. That meant that Jesus had only a limited period in which to accomplish the task which He had set before Himself. How far He foresaw the whole of the future development of His work, it is not possible for us to say, and Mark gives us no hint. The problem is rather one for the dogmatic theologian than for the student whose aim is the understanding of this particular book. One thing, however, is clear, Mark writes as if he supposed Jesus to be limited in His outlook on what lay in the future. It is true that he depicts Jesus as from time to time telling His disciples what would happen to Him, but as one reads this record one feels that the prophecies of this kind made by Jesus are due to foresight and conviction rather than to foreknowledge, to a clear appreciation of the facts and their meaning rather than to an accurate and telescopic view of events still to come. An exception may appear in the case of the prediction of His own sufferings, but as the last scenes of the book show, this was due to deliberate purpose on His part. For

the rest, if we had no other guide to the facts than this Gospel, we should suppose that Jesus was unaware of events till they actually came upon Him, and shaped His plans as circumstances required.

Mark, however, often leaves things to be inferred when he does not explicitly state them. We have here, for instance no remark to the effect that Jesus was aware of the step that had been taken by the Pharisees. Luke, it is true (xiii. 31) tells of a warning, apparently friendly, given by certain Pharisees to Jesus, to the effect that Herod had made up his mind to kill him. But of this incident there is no trace in Mark. Yet, even from this narrative, it is clear that Jesus was aware in some way of what had taken place, and was taking measures to meet the new situation. No other explanation of His action in various directions seems to be possible. Some of the events recorded in the next few chapters might be accounted for on other grounds. but not all, and there remain one or two features of the events of the next period which, it would seem, are necessarily due to a knowledge of the fact that His life was in immediate danger from Herod and the party that supported him.

But, whatever may have been the feeling of the officials in Church and State, for the time being the popularity of Jesus remained unabated. In fact it rather increased. This was in large measure due to the stories of His miraculous powers of healing rather than to any real appreciation of His message. His name was known throughout the whole country, and Mark states that visitors came from every part of Palestine to see Him and to be cured by Him. It was believed that there was some miraculous virtue residing in Him which was independent of His own volition. That the belief was well founded is shown by an incident reported by Mark at a later point, but its immediate effects were far from being what Jesus

Himself would have desired. This miscellaneous crowd so pressed and thronged Him, and was so importunate with its demand for healing, that it was impossible for Him to continue the work on which His heart was set. Throughout the whole story, Jesus is represented as torn between two conflicting appeals, that of His own mind and purpose, and that which came to Him from suffering humanity. He had the power to cure people as no one else had ever done, and not unnaturally men wanted to be cured and to see others cured. But His main mission was something quite different. Whilst He was competent to deal with men's bodies, His principal business was with their minds and souls. The relief of physical suffering was to Him a side issue. He had to reveal God and to expound the purposes of God. These were such as none before Him had ever suspected. His whole view of the Kingdom of God was in a very real sense diametrically opposed to that which was current in His time. This new thing He had to get into people's hearts and spirits. His wonderful powers did not a little to authenticate His message in the minds of those who heard Him, but at the same time they tended to make them listen less carefully. In some cases, no doubt, He found what He wanted, but in the majority He could see quite clearly that the best He had to give was not that which men most desired from Him.

So the crowd had, in a sense, to be held at arm's length. This Jesus secured with the aid of His fisherman friends, who supplied a boat and took Him a little way out from the shore. He was still within audible distance of the people, but they could no longer touch Him. They were now unable to distract Him and themselves from what He was saying. They were prevented from draining His strength by the act of healing, and He was in a position to communicate to them what He really had to say.

It is significant that we have in this part of the Gospel little if any indication of the content of the teaching of Jesus. That would seem to correspond with the facts of the case. It was not what He said that made an impression on people at this time, it was what He was. Whilst this Gospel contains less of the teaching of Jesus than any other, the preponderance of events over recorded utterances is far less later on. One feels that the words He spoke in this and similar addresses had comparatively little effect on their hearers. This, as we shall see presently, was to a large extent the feeling of Jesus Himself. Consequently the preaching played a slight part in the development of the story. Such remarks as are recorded in chapters i. and ii. are of a conversational character, and could hardly be included in the main body of His doctrine.

From the standpoint of the ordinary man, then, the preaching of Jesus at this time was practically a failure. The conditions were such as to make it almost impossible for Him to achieve any greater success by methods already followed. His life was now in some danger, and the whole situation demanded swift and radical change. And at once Jesus entirely altered the method of His work. In one respect (and that the most important) He had succeeded ; there was a body of men who were prepared to attach themselves wholly to Him. They included the first four whose special call was one of the earliest public acts of Jesus. He now turned to them and to others likeminded with them, and began to concentrate on their training.

The reasons for this are not far to seek. The Pharisee-Herodian plot had brought the end of His work within measurable distance. It was hopeless to expect to get any true comprehension either of Himself or of His message into the minds of a population which was inclined to run miracle-mad. If there was to be any permanent value to His life, there must be a

body of persons who really did understand Him, who could take up His work and carry it on after He was gone. They must have such teaching as could not possibly be given in the midst of the crowd. They must " be with Him "—that is the express reason for their selection. They must also in some measure have the power that He had. His authority in cases of possession was to be vested in them, and, as the sequel showed (though Mark does not mention it) they were to have similar gifts of healing.

The character and qualities of the men selected has frequently been a matter of comment. Of most of them very little is known save through tradition. Their names, with one or two exceptions, are seldom mentioned in the Gospels again.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel, indeed, seems to have set himself to introduce them all at least once each into his narrative, though in one or two cases there are those of the Twelve to whom he makes no reference. There are four lists of the Twelve, and there are variations even in these. Identification in such cases is somewhat precarious, though it is natural that some attempt should be made to find the same person under different names. There is an occasional remark which throws a little light on one and another. Simon stands out on all occasions as the leader and representative of the whole company. In the first Gospel (though nowhere else in the New Testament) the Matthew of the lists is identified with the Levi whose call had been fraught with such important results. To three of them Jesus gave " nicknames "—perhaps in humorous comment or mild rebuke on features in their character or conduct. And that is practically all that our Gospels have to tell us about them, at least as individuals.

It is probable, indeed almost certain, that all twelve were men of much the same social status. That is to say, they were peasants. Four were certainly fishermen, the

only ones, apart from Levi, about whose occupation doubt is impossible. The story proves that they were not selected for any peculiar qualities of intellect, rank or wealth. If anything, they were below the average of intelligence, and clearly none of them had much to boast of in the way of social standing or of money. Yet Jesus chose them, and chose them deliberately. It would seem that they had one supreme quality; they were all honest, straightforward men, simple but true. And it is characteristic of Jesus that He should have chosen such people. They were of the type that anybody could be. Anything that could be done with them, could be done with any other man—provided only he were sincere. What Jesus saw in them was humanity, and humanity was always His greatest interest. A real man, no matter how poor or humble or stupid, would do for Him. If He could succeed with these, His ultimate triumph was assured. He chose them, if we may venture to conjecture His motives, because they were representative men.

The appointment of the Twelve, then, suggests that Jesus was aware of the plots in existence against His life, and was taking measures to secure the permanence of His work. But others seem to have been aware of it besides Himself. His own family must have watched His progress and fortunes with interest and anxiety. Clearly a hint of danger reached them, and they made a determined effort to save Him. Leaving Nazareth, they followed Him and found Him in a house so full of visitors that whilst they could not get in, it was equally impossible for Him to get away from them. They made an attempt to get Him brought out to them, alleging that He was perfectly harmless from the political point of view. What was wrong with Him, they said, was that He was not really sane. This charge, serious though it may seem to us, and grave though the doubts may be that it throws on their

understanding of Him, was intended to have a double bearing. In the first place, if He were not sane, then there was no danger to be apprehended from Him. He would not make any real attempt to overthrow the Herods and to expel the Romans from Palestine. But there was another point of view. The madman in the East is always regarded as being in some special relation to God. So the family of Jesus, His mother and His brothers, put forward this excuse and defence, at the same time undertaking to carry Him home with them and to keep Him under restraint.

Those who had come from a distance to see and hear Jesus were not all of them sympathetic. Enemies of His were there, and though they had secured the support and co-operation of the civil authorities, they were anxious to discredit Jesus as much as possible with the crowd. Even the Romans and the Herods usually avoided a serious conflict with the mass of the people, and while Jesus was the most popular person in Galilee, it was not likely that there would be an opportunity of getting rid of Him. It probably seemed to the Pharisees that the remark made by the family of Jesus gave them an opportunity.

His methods in exorcism were abnormal, and the suggestion that He was insane was easily turned into the further suspicion that He was Himself possessed. This, they might urge, would explain both His original mode of dealing with demoniac cases and the mental disease which His own people acknowledged. So the whisper was circulated that " He has a devil, and it is because He is possessed by no less a fiend than the prince of the devils that He has this authority over them." It reached the ears of Jesus, and roused Him to a reply. This was a double condemnation of His opponents. In the first place their fault was an intellectual one, in the second it was a moral one. As He said, it was a most stupid charge to bring against

Him. If there was one thing that was clear, it was that the Devil was not such a fool as the Pharisees made him out to be. If he opposed himself, as they said he did, he would certainly ruin himself. It was absurd to suppose that he would be so silly. It could not be a new diabolical triumph that so many men were liberated from the chains of the devil. On the contrary, the very fact that these evil spirits were so easily overcome proved that the force of supreme goodness was at work and was triumphing in the world. Spoil cannot be recovered from a brigand chief till his stronghold is taken and he himself rendered helpless. So those who are under the dominion of the powers of evil cannot be rescued from those powers till the captors themselves are conquered and enchained. One need not discuss the whole question of diabolical possession or accept the terms in which these phenomena were described by the contemporaries of Jesus (and therefore by Himself) in order to appreciate the validity of His argument.

No; Jesus was clearly possessed by a Spirit, but it was not an evil power, but the Holy Spirit. That was clear from the facts. But they, seeing the work of this Holy Spirit had attributed its work to an evil spirit. This it was which called forth the second condemnation of Jesus, the moral one. The "sin against the Holy Ghost" has worried a great many people, and various theories that have been held have in some cases given rise to religious mania. A consideration of the circumstances under which Jesus spoke of it, and a critical study of the Gospels would have saved much of this. What Jesus meant by this sin is quite clear. Those who were guilty of it had seen something that could only have a good source, and they were so blinded and drugged by their theological preconceptions and their personal antagonisms that they attributed this good thing to the powers of evil.

It was a determined confusion of moral issues, a deliberate setting of darkness for light and light for darkness. As long as people insist on not knowing the difference between right and wrong, it is impossible for them to come into touch with a God, who, with all His personal characteristics is also the ultimate moral goodness. They are indeed guilty of an eternal sin.

At last the real message from the door reached Jesus, and He was told that His family wished to see Him. He seemed to have had no doubt as to their purpose and it was one which, from His point of view, must be defeated. The answer which He gave was in effect a denial of the peculiar claims even of His own relatives over against those of His work. He had left His home, and had entered a new circle. In this new circle, that of the Kingdom of God, ties of blood counted for nothing. What did count was the common acceptance of a certain purpose and rule of life—the doing of the will of God. All who recognised in God's will the supreme and decisive factor in all human consideration belonged to this new community which Jesus came to found, and its ties were no less close than those of actual blood relationship. To the western Christian, brought up in a family whose members frequently all profess to accept this principle, such a statement means comparatively little. The conflict between the two societies is not commonly obvious. But to the convert from Hinduism, cut off from all his old associations, it is a vital reality to find himself in a new community where he can meet others who share his outlook and profession. In a sense practically unknown to us, they are his mother and his brethren.

One of the most striking results of the hostility of the Pharisees—with which, perhaps, the last incident was connected—was the change in the method of teaching adopted by Jesus. Whilst He, like every

other oriental teacher, had made use of metaphor and simile, His public preaching seems always to have been straightforward and intelligible to any who might be listening. But this would no longer do. There were those about Him now who would be on the watch for every word He uttered, in the hope that they might find something which could be used as a handle against Him. And at the same time it was necessary for Him to continue giving instruction to His own disciples, whether sufficient privacy could be secured or not. And it usually could not. He must now adopt some form of instruction which should be harmless and almost meaningless to the casual or to the critical hearer, but at the same time would convey a real and deep truth to those whom He wished especially to instruct. Accordingly Jesus abandoned the direct method and took to the parabolic form (iv. 1-34). This served His immediate purpose admirably. To those who sincerely wished to follow up what He had to give, He was always willing to explain what the precise meaning of His parable was. And these thirty-four verses contain, not so much a series of consecutive lessons of this type, but rather a group of typical parables, serving to illustrate the method which Jesus pursued during this period. The significant statement is found in v. 34 that He never spoke to the crowd except in parables, but that He explained everything to His disciples when they were alone.

The parables themselves are worth studying one by one. The first is one of the most significant, and it has a certain pathos about it, which every reader must feel (iv. 20-1). It is a record of what Jesus had found as a result of His own teaching. Viewed in this light, it is to some extent a confession of failure. Many had heard Him speak, but few had really cared about what He meant them to understand. Some had come to Him and listened without the least impression being

made upon them. Others had accorded to Him a brief enthusiasm, and had followed Him for a short time, only to leave Him at the first sign of hostility on the part of His enemies. Others had heard Him, but gone away and found that His teaching was too good for the world in which they lived. So they had turned back to their old life and to their old occupations, and had thought no more about it. To them the Kingdom of God, as He expounded it, was a beautiful dream, fair but Utopian, and in no way to be accommodated to the affairs of practical life in whose midst they lived. But there was another side to the matter. There were some—not only the Twelve, but many others also—who had found in this presentation of the Kingdom of God all that their hearts had desired, who recognised supreme goodness when it was set before them, and in the years to come they would gather round the centre of that Church which was to come into existence only after His work was done.

There follow five verses (iv. 21-25) in which Jesus is still speaking directly to His disciples, apparently, as Mark tells His story, in continuation of His explanation of the parable first given. It is, of course, quite possible that these sayings were preserved independently, and inserted here by the Evangelist as being suitable in this connection. The fact of the parables itself would suggest that though their meaning might for the time be obscure, yet a fuller revelation of their purport would come. The saying which warns his audience to use their intelligence as well as their ears would also seem suitable to this occasion. So too would that vaguer aphorism which implies in this connection that the power to understand one of these strange stories of Jesus might be indefinitely increased by exercise. But though all might be held to have a special bearing on the immediate circumstances, yet it is equally true that all have a wider and more universal

application, and would possibly have suited many other occasions in the life of Jesus.

Two other parables are given in this chapter, as illustrating the character of the teaching of Jesus during this period. Both are pictures of the methods by which the Kingdom of God grows, and both are drawn —as all the parables of Jesus were—from facts familiar to His country audience. The first (iv. 26-29) speaks of the silent and imperceptible growth and spread of His teaching. It is interesting to find that neither Matthew nor Luke saw fit to incorporate this one in their work, unless the parable of the Tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30, 36-50) be an "improved" version of it. It suggests that whilst the success of the work of Jesus was not obvious, yet He knew that there were forces active in the spiritual world whose power could not be estimated, and whose progress eluded observation. But, nevertheless, they would sooner or later come to full fruition, and the Kingdom of God would appear when men least expected it.

The second of the two short parables is the well known one of the Mustard Seed. It springs perhaps out of the former one. Some readers have found a special protective capacity indicated in the mention of the birds that take shelter under its branches. This is carrying the force of application too far. This feature of the full grown plant is simply a further illustration of the size to which it grows from so small a beginning.

The whole method of Jesus, then, has undergone a complete change. He now will deal with a small body of people instead of with the large crowds. Instead of speaking publicly in direct terms of what He means by the Kingdom of God, He will use parables. A third effect is seen almost at once. Jesus withdraws Himself as far as possible from the company of men, and takes His immediate companions with Him. This was the only means whereby His purpose with them could be

achieved. It was clear that the hostility of His enemies would triumph sooner or later if He remained within their reach. He must avoid them and escape from them at least for a time. Till His disciples knew enough to carry on the work that lay before them without His bodily presence, He must be with them, and instil into their minds and hearts as much of His principles as they were capable of receiving. They must have a basis on which to start, and as yet they were very far from having that basis. It is true that the actual effect of the Herodian influence does not reach its complete development till later in the narrative, and that it then produces a fresh modification in the course of Jesus' life. But the hostility which underlay it was already at work, and Jesus knew that His time was short.

But the need for the preservation of His own life was far from being the only consideration with Jesus at this time. Even though He had in a large measure abandoned the attempt to win men in masses by public preaching, they still thronged round Him, and still demanded miracles of exorcism and healing. And the need for quiet communion with His disciples was imperative. They were not men with student habits of close attention. It was difficult for Him to get them to listen and to understand when there was little to distract their minds. In the midst of the crowds and the bustle which Mark has depicted as being always around Jesus, it was practically impossible for Him to give or for them to absorb that teaching which it was so essential for them to receive. He must get them away. They had to be trained in many ways, and it was necessary that they, as well as their Master, should be freed from the pressure of popularity.

The first attempt in this direction is described in iv. 35-41. Utterly exhausted by His teaching and by the general strain upon Him, He was taken by His

disciples in a boat on the sea, with the object of crossing over to the south-eastern corner of the Sea of Galilee. A violent storm swept down from the mountains round the Lake, and He was awakened by His terrified companions. They do not seem to have been making any appeal to Him ; they simply could not understand His placidity in the face of danger. The sequel amazed them beyond measure. Once thoroughly awakened He rebuked the elements, and a great calm immediately followed. This was certainly not what they had expected. And Jesus used the opportunity thus presented to Him to offer them some teaching. They should have had sufficient confidence in the general rightness of things not to be so terrified. They should have realised that with Him in their midst no harm could befal them. There was brought up against them the strong contrast between fear and faith, the one a loss of balance and sense, the other a reliance on some power at least greater than themselves. They were helpless, but what of that ?

The lesson, though verbally remembered, was for the present lost on them. They were overwhelmed by the miracle, and simply wondered. After all, they were very like the multitude.

Questions on Chapter IV

1. Do you think that Jesus knew everything, past, present, and future ? Or was His knowledge limited like that of His contemporaries ?
2. On what principle do you think that Jesus chose His disciples ?
3. What grounds had the mother and brothers of Jesus for believing He was mad ? If they were not quite sure, were they justified in trying to save Him on that pretext ?
4. Was it fair to the world at large that Jesus should offer them His teaching in a form which He did not mean them to understand ?
5. Is a man justified in modifying his plans of work because his life may be in danger ?

Chapter V

THE QUEST OF PRIVACY

(Mark v. 1—viii. 26)

The life of Jesus had thus reached the point at which it was imperative that He should get His disciples to Himself. But privacy was not so easily secured. Jesus had these powers of exorcism and healing, and He was constantly faced with terrible human need. This constituted an appeal which He could not resist. Yet as surely as a single work of healing was performed, so surely did it become impossible for Him to remain where He was. Crowds gathered around, His opportunity of dealing with the Twelve alone was lost, and He had to go elsewhere to find another chance. And so this section of His life is the record of a constant struggle on His part. Always the attempt to get the disciples to Himself, and always the counter demand of men for healing. Towards the end this conflict was complicated by the certainty of the efforts of Herod to seize Him and put Him to death, but the main motif of the whole is the repeated but unsuccessful attempt to secure privacy.

This is apparent in the first event of the series—the cure of the Gerasene demoniac (v. 1-20). It is the direct continuation of the end of the last section. The closing paragraph of chapter iv. describes Jesus and His disciples setting out over the sea to find comparative peace. They landed near a cemetery and at once were met—note again Mark's insistence on the absence of any interval for repose—by a demoniac.

This was an extreme case of great violence and obstinacy. Whilst there is no evidence to show that attempts had been made to cure him by the ordinary methods of exorcism, it is hardly likely that such means had been left untried. Not only so, but whereas the ordinary demoniac attacks seem to have been intermittent, this man's case seems to have been chronic. All efforts to control him by force had failed, and he had been driven out from the homes of men. But the case was not beyond the power of Jesus. It is to be noted that He used a different method from His ordinary one, Reference has already been made to the fact that the normal exorcist endeavoured to find out the name of the spirit. Jesus in this instance shows an interest in the name. But His method is not that of the ordinary exorcist. The latter had to discover the name before he had any authority over the case. Jesus exhibited His power in compelling the spirit (or spirits) to furnish the name—a very different thing, and a mark of an entirely different grade of authority.

Some short conversation followed between Jesus and the patient. A herd of swine was feeding by, and Mark states that the spirit asked and received permission to enter them. Immediately the herd was seized with some kind of panic, and rushed down a steep slope into the sea, where all were drowned. There has been a good deal of doubt and discussion aroused by this narrative. It is difficult to argue with any sense of certainty one way or the other. The fact which stands out is the implicit belief of all contemporaries in the existence of evil spirits, in their habit of taking possession of human beings and also of animals, and the possibility of such events as that here described. It is possible to escape from a literal acceptance of these beliefs by remembering that every age sees, describes and explains in its own way. It may even be held that a coincidence, the cure of a hysterical or even insane

patient by the strong personal magnetism of Jesus together with one of those wild panics to which swine are said to be subject, has influenced the narrative, and that this coincidence, together with the popular beliefs on the subject, was responsible for the details of the cure as Mark describes them. At the same time one is naturally chary of doubting the accuracy of a writer of such general historic standing as Mark, living so near to the events which he describes, and it is possible that further study of the subject may tend to restore a more literal belief in evil spirits, their activities and manifestations, even for the most sceptical. The subject is far too large a one to be discussed here.

There can, however, be no question as to the reality of the cure of this man, and of the results of this cure. A crowd gathered, not this time in eager hope of seeing more of this exorcism, but in fear of the power which lay behind it. It was impossible for Jesus to remain, and He had to return with His disciples. The quondam demoniac not unnaturally desired to attach himself to his healer. This Jesus would not allow. The presence of a man who was a subject of one of those miracles which were creating so much difficulty for Jesus would be a source of embarrassment, while, as He was leaving the district, perhaps never to return, it would be to the advantage of His work in later years to have some strong support in the place. In days to come, perhaps long after Jesus Himself had gone, His apostles would once more be there, preaching His Kingdom. Their task would be greatly simplified if the name and something of the work of Jesus were familiar in the place.

In the meantime Jesus returned, apparently to Capernaum. As usual crowds met Him, and He was soon confronted with an appeal for help from one of the rulers of the synagogue. He went with him, to heal his daughter, and in the evangelist's story one can

follow the feelings of the father. He had left the lassie at the point of death, the case was one of extreme urgency, the least delay might be fatal. But progress was slow in the extreme. Jesus could not escape from the crowd, and such masses of people move slowly. Still, they moved, till there came an interruption. A suffering woman crept behind Jesus in the press and touched Him, or rather the tassel of His robe. She found what she wanted, but Jesus was instantly conscious of what had happened, and had to have an explanation. The whole crowd stopped altogether while her case was receiving His personal attention, and one can imagine the growing anxiety of Jairus. At last the matter was settled, and progress was about to be resumed, when his worst fears were realised. A messenger came from the house to say that it was too late; the child had already passed away. One gathers that in his despair the man refused to take this as final, and still turned his face to Jesus. For the servant went on to ask, "Why are you still worrying the Teacher?" So Jesus, with a word of encouragement, went on, and, refusing to accept the opinion of anybody else, in the end restored the child to her parents. The narrative has always been a favourite one with readers of the Gospels, and rightly so, for many reasons. For us the conclusion is of special importance. Jesus had raised her up, but He endeavoured to take the most thorough precautions to obtain secrecy. Three only of His immediate followers were permitted to see what He did, and Jesus laid the most stringent injunctions on all who were present to keep the facts from becoming publicly known. His reputation as a miraculous healer was large enough already; notoriety on this new head He had no desire to win.

Probably this visit to Capernaum was never intended to be more than a short one, and the raising of Jairus' daughter seems to have made it imperative for Him

to leave the city and seek elsewhere for that solitude which He so much needed. He therefore came to Nazareth. But here too He failed to find what He wanted. The reason, however, was not the usual one. There were no admiring crowds, no throngs of sick, pleading for relief. Instead, coldness, doubt and something approaching contempt. In an atmosphere so definitely hostile, though miraculous cures were all but impossible, yet concentration on His teaching was equally impossible, and once again Jesus and His disciples are found moving in search of the opportunity which He required.

This time there seems to have been no attempt to find a place where Jesus could stay for any length of time. He simply led them from one place to another. This at least gave Him the opportunity for one element in the training of the Twelve. They were sent away from Him to carry on work in the same manner as He Himself worked. They carried with them the authority and power of Jesus Himself, and engaged in the threefold task of preaching, exorcism and healing. Yet it would seem that though their work was in many ways similar to His, there were differences. In particular their treatment of the sick was nearer to that of the ordinary physician. Instead of healing with a word or a touch, they used material means, especially that of anointing. Yet they did cure people, and in so doing discovered that there was conferred on them something of the power of Jesus Himself. The instructions given to them are interesting. They are to go out in absolute poverty. As they start on their daily road they are to make no provision whatever for their material needs. Staff and shoes are the only property they may take with them. One of the lessons they have to learn is that of absolute dependence. The treatment they are to accord to different classes of places is also significant. Where hospitality is offered freely and

willingly, it is to be accepted, but where it is refused or grudged, nothing is to be received, not even dust which may accidently adhere to their persons. Similar importance is to be attached to the acceptance or otherwise of the message they have to bring. One may conjecture that something like this was the method of Jesus Himself on His preaching journeys.

It was while the Twelve were absent on their several tours that the plot of the Pharisees took real effect. How the thing was managed we do not know, but information was brought to Herod, and brought in such a way as to lead him to believe that Jesus was John come to life again. There follows (vi. 14-29) a parenthesis by the evangelist, explaining the circumstances of John's death. Mark's reasons for giving the story at such length are not clear. It is perhaps the only instance in which he devotes so much space to details which do not bear immediately on the historical development of the narrative. The fact in itself, however, is of the highest importance. It serves to illustrate the lengths to which Herod was prepared to go in dealing with people who were hostile to him, and also explains the lines on which that hostility was aroused against Jesus. An attempt had been made to get the man out of the way, and the attempt had apparently failed. A second one must be made, and made in such a fashion that it should not fail. A John who had the power of rising from the dead was very much more dangerous than a mere outspoken moral reformer, and might constitute a grave peril to the authority and position of the Tetrarch, especially if he were actuated by a spirit of revenge.

It is probable that the death of John took place some time before the events narrated in this section of the Gospel. It is introduced here because of the effect it had upon the life and methods of Jesus. It must have been at this time that Jesus Himself became aware

of the results of the hostility of the Pharisees, and of their success in rousing the civil power against Him. His disciples were away on a tour, and in any case they were still far from being ready to be left to themselves. The need for privacy had become more urgent than ever, and at the same time the personal risk which Jesus ran had enormously increased. He must get away from all the old scenes and associations, into circles which had not known Him, and where He would not be exposed to the immediate vengeance of His enemies. He had first been compelled to withdraw from Capernaum; He must now leave the dominions of Herod altogether. A study of the map* shows that from this time on till the final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus deliberately tried to avoid the Tetrachy of Herod. In other words, to use a phrase which is familiar to many of us, Jesus goes into exile.

The first step is taken as soon as the disciples return from their tour. There are still the great crowds, claiming the attention of Jesus, and preventing Him from getting that time alone with His disciples which was now of primary importance. In fact, as the Evangelist says, there was not even time for a meal (vi. 30-31). Accordingly He arranges for them to go away with Him into some place where they will not be disturbed, and they take a boat for the purpose. But they are observed and followed by a large crowd, which once more appeals to His compassion with such force that He cannot but give time to them. The story, with its sequel, is told in vi. 32-44. It is interesting to note again that there is little or no reference to or account of the actual teaching given by Jesus on this occasion. Instead there is a full account of their being fed in a miraculous fashion by Him. Again one feels that it is this which impressed them. The new light

* See especially the map in Burkitt's *Gospel History and its Transmission*, facing p. 92.

that they might have had on God and man was too new and too bright. Public teaching of this kind—and probably Jesus spoke almost entirely in parables—had comparatively little permanent effect. Men forgot what Jesus said; they remembered Him and what He did.

As soon as the strange meal was over, Jesus resumed the attempt to secure privacy (vi. 45-52). His disciples were sent away in a boat towards Bethsaida, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, at a point where they would be within the Tetrachy of Herod Philip. Here they might be at once unknown and out of danger. It was clearly the intention of Jesus to follow them by land, and He first withdrew Himself for prayer. After all, as long as He was not with them, it did not matter that their destination was known. It was He whom men sought, not the Twelve. From the high shores of the Lake, and from the hills which surround it their progress might be watched, but that did not matter. No one would try to anticipate them. In the meantime He might be able to escape from the crowd, and make His way to the rendezvous undisturbed. But they never reached Bethsaida. A violent storm came on, and they were in extreme danger. Suddenly Jesus appeared to them on the water, entered their vessel, and, as on a former occasion, stilled the storm.

They were nevertheless compelled to put back to the western shore of the Lake. This was the country from which Jesus had wished to get away, and His plans were immediately justified (vi. 53-56). He was at once recognised; crowds gathered about Him; the sick and the suffering were brought to Him from every direction. Even the preaching of the Kingdom would have been impossible to Him, still more impossible was that quiet communion with His disciples which He needed and sought. Nor was this confined

now to the cities and villages. The very roads were equally crowded, and the sick were laid in the fields in the open country wherever He was likely to pass by. Not merely was His popularity maintained, it was greatly enhanced, and thereby the difficulties of His position were enhanced also.

But all those who thronged round Him were not necessarily His friends. They included His bitter enemies, Pharisees and Scribes (vii. 1-23). In order, apparently, to discredit Him with the crowd, they attacked Him on the ground of neglect of the traditional rites of purification. Reference has been made elsewhere to the oriental stress on the purity of meals, and it was important in the eyes of the strict Jew to see that he was free from pollution even accidentally contracted in his daily business. Jesus, with His spiritual view of life and all its circumstances, had clearly refrained from enforcing the regulations which were intended to guard against impurity contracted in this way. Probably He did not observe them Himself. The Pharisees found in this a handle against Him, and attacked Him on this ground. Earlier in His ministry Jesus had defended Himself against the parallel charge of eating with publicans and sinners, and had used the opportunity to lay down new principles. But now the conditions were different. The breach between Him and the official leaders of the Jewish Church had gone too far for Him to hope to get any sense into them, and His reply was not a defence but a counter-charge. All these minute and detailed regulations, said Jesus, are being used to obscure the real principles which underlie the Law. It may be true that there are a large number of things expressly forbidden or permitted, but even the Law (as already stated by Him in the matter of the Sabbath) is subject to interpretation and revision in the light of the consecrated intelligence applied to the great principles

on which the Law was based. As always, it was common sense to which Jesus appealed, and when His disciples asked Him about the meaning of what He had said, He rebuked them, not for any moral fault, but because they should have seen for themselves where the right lay. In His view it was the ethics of the Law that counted, not its ritual. If the latter interfered with the former, the latter must go. One illustration is given, that of the respect due to parents. Where traditional piety prevented or was allowed to be substituted for this, traditional piety proved itself to be in the wrong. From time to time explanations of this passage have been given which make it appear that the promised money was not actually devoted to the service of God. Jesus gives no hint of this, and from His words there is no reason to believe that He contemplated any such limitation. If a man is morally bound to contribute to the support of his parents, he has no right to render himself incapable of doing so through his gifts to the sanctuary.

Returning to the immediate point on which discussion had arisen, Jesus went so far as to call together the whole crowd and address them directly. His statement was couched in an epigrammatic form which was calculated to have the same kind of effect as the parable. And in fact the Twelve needed an explanation—and had it. In a few sentences Jesus swept aside the whole of the laws of food, and so fully was this realised, that the evangelist adds a parenthesis to the effect that this pronouncement implied that all forms of food were equally permissible. On the other hand the real defilement was spiritual and moral. That alone would count in the Kingdom of God.

These events made it still more clear that Jesus could not stay where He was. He must get away, beyond the reach of the crowds, and beyond the reach of those who were aware of His healing powers, beyond

the reach of those who would bring His career to a premature end. The attempt to reach Bethsaida had failed. The next attempt was not made by water at all. Turning in the opposite direction, Jesus and His disciples travelled towards the north-west. He passed right through Galilee, and reached the territory of Phœnicia. Now He was not merely outside the Tetrachy of Herod Antipas, He was no longer within the limits of territory which could be called Jewish. Here, among the absolute heathen, it might be expected that He would find what He needed and sought. But it was not so. In a land of strangers as He was, He nevertheless took extra precautions to secure privacy. But even so " He could not be hid." A native woman of the place came to Him to ask for help in the cure of a daughter who was possessed. We have no means of knowing how she found Him out ; we may suspect the proud garrulity of the Twelve. It must always be remembered that they were in no way above the level of their contemporaries in understanding of their Leader and His character and teaching. They probably loved the miracle as much as anybody, and were anxious to see these acts of healing. Moreover, if we may form an opinion from the scanty references to their reception of His teaching, they were still incapable of understanding anything that He said to them, unless it was couched in the most ordinary language. To them, interesting as the words of Jesus might be, the really attractive thing was to see the demons quail and the sick suddenly resume their strength. It is not difficult to imagine that it was some remark of theirs which led to the discovery of Jesus by this woman.

Be that as it may, she found Him. But then her real difficulties began. Jesus had come to this part of the country expressly to avoid this kind of thing. If He had felt it necessary or even desirable to exercise His powers, His own people had the first claim upon

Him.* One gets the impression that He repulsed her in words which the ordinary Jew might well have used, but which sound strange from the lips of Jesus. So offensive does His remark appear, that it has been suggested that Jesus did not really use the language attributed to Him, but that it was put into His mouth by the narrator of the story in order to explain her reply—a reflection back of her own words. Be this as it may, her method and quick wit appealed to Jesus, and again He could not resist the appeal. He spoke the word, and the girl was cured.

But the result of this act of mercy was the usual one. Jesus had to leave the district. Instead of continuing His progress northwards, He turned again to the south, but kept throughout His journey to the west of Galilee proper, till He and His disciples were well to the south of the Sea of Galilee. Then turning eastward He seems to have crossed the Jordan and entered the district known as the Decapolis. This was a confederation of Greek cities, and one notes the working of the same impulse—to keep away, not merely from the territory of Herod Antipas, but also from places where Jews might be expected to form the majority of the population. Here He was in the same quarter, though not in the same immediate district as He had been on that first attempt to get away from the multitudes, which had been brought to an end so soon by the cure of the Gerasene demoniac. Here again the crowds were with Him, though no miracle seems to have been performed till the coming of a deaf mute who was brought by his friends (vii. 31-37) As in other cases Jesus did His best to secure secrecy. He took the sufferer away by himself, and, this time using

* It is possible that sufficient attention has not been paid to this aspect of the attitude of Jesus to His work. He seems always to have kept His own people in the foreground, to become later the evangelising agents for the heathen world. Cf. J. R. Coates "The Christ of Revolution."

some mechanical means, cured him so thoroughly that full powers of speech were immediately restored to him. And here too, as on other occasions, there is evidence to show that the cure cost Jesus effort, and possibly something more, for as He spoke the words which indicated the moment of cure, a groan also burst from His lips. And further, Jesus made every effort to bind the sufferer and his friends to silence, but all in vain. It was very natural to people who did not understand Him—and who did understand Him?—to think that it would be to His advantage to sing His praises wherever they could, and yet the truest gratitude would have been shown by responding to His wishes, and preventing His powers from being publicly known.

In order, apparently, to secure some measure of privacy, Jesus made His way into some desolate region. But even there He was followed, and for three days the crowd hung round Him. At last, faint and weary, far from their homes, they were no longer able to listen to Him with profit. As once before, Jesus supplied their physical needs, and sent them away. It has been urged that this narrative is only another form of the story of the feeding of the Five Thousand.* In that case we have an interesting double attestation of the miracle, and the variations themselves tend to confirm the substantial truth of the narrative. The result in the progress of events was as before. Jesus had to leave the district, and this time left it by water, making His way to an unidentified district, whose name has been handed down to us in Mark as Dalmanutha.†

* For a statement of this view (which extends to the whole section) the reader cannot do better than study C. H. Dodd's article in the "Expositor" for October, 1921 on *The Close of the Galilean Ministry*.

† No other reference to this place or district is known, and it is possible that the appearance of the name is due to very early textual corruption.

Here (viii. 11-12) Jesus was met by Pharisees, who demanded of Him a sign. This was to be one of the indications of the coming Messiah, and their request was practically a challenge to Him to declare Himself. As might have been foreseen, He refused, and the whole party left the place for Bethsaida. It would appear that there was some haste about their departure, for the disciples forgot to provision the boat properly. What followed (viii. 14-21) serves as an admirable illustration of the kind of difficulty which faced Jesus in dealing with His disciples. He had them to Himself for a time, and could begin to teach them, or at any rate to point the moral of recent events. He began by bidding them beware of the leaven of Herod and of the Pharisees. And nobody will ever know what He meant by that phrase. Luke seems to have interpreted it as a warning against hypocrisy. This might suit the Pharisees, but hardly Herod, who may have been guilty of almost everything else, but hardly of hypocrisy. More probably the reference was to that unholy alliance which threatened to bring the life and work of Jesus to an untimely close. But all this is matter for conjecture, for He never had an opportunity to explain. Their slow minds caught at the word leaven and that awakened a familiar chord of memory. It is used in the making of bread. The suggestion of bread perhaps sent them to look in the locker—or wherever else it was that they carried their provisions —and in any case brought home to them the appalling fact that they had only one loaf with them. That was all they could think of, and Jesus had to go back over an old lesson, and try to appeal to their common sense again. They had just seen Him feed four thousand people with wholly inadequate supplies and only a few months before they had seen Him feed five thousand with one boy's rations. Why should they worry about food? Had they not even the sense to put two and

two together? Jesus, who had saved these huge crowds from starvation, would not let them perish with hunger.

At last they reached Bethsaida. Here they were once more outside the Tetrarchy of Antipas, though still within the sphere of Jewish influence. And even here the old routine of human suffering and appeal, of the healing by Jesus and His consequent departure was repeated. In this case it was a blind man who was brought to Jesus for help, and received it. The method again differs from any previously recorded of Him. It is noticeable that the cure was performed gradually. The first application produced only a vague and misty vision which could only distinguish between men and trees by the fact that the former had the powers of locomotion while the latter had not. Then came the second touch of the hands of Jesus, and the complete and perfect sight was restored. The strictest injunctions were laid on the man to go straight home, without a word to his fellow-villagers, but the result was the same—Jesus had to leave the district (viii. 22-26).

So this period ends, for the next incident, while it closes this portion of the life of Jesus, is also the beginning of the next. Several months must have been covered by this search for privacy. The grass was still green at its beginning, and the five thousand must have been fed not later than the month of May. It was now the early spring, and the Passover was at hand. Through all these months Jesus had been wandering homeless, always in search of that opportunity for quiet companionship with His disciples which He needed. Two other explanations of this period of the ministry of Jesus have been offered. One is that of the "eschatological" school of Gospel exegesis, which believes that Jesus expected some colossal catastrophe which was to usher in the new Kingdom, and had retired from public life in order to wait for it. It is unnecessary

to discuss this further at this point, except to remark that it involves an entirely fresh reading of the whole Gospel story, and that while some allowance must be made for eschatological elements in the teaching of Jesus, such a view as this overlooks so much that is recorded and assumes so much that is not recorded, that it is tantamount to the abandonment of the historicity of the Gospels. The other view (strongly held by Burkitt) is that the wanderings of Jesus were due entirely to the hostility of Herod Antipas. Allowance must be made for this, and in the preceding pages has been made. It explains much—especially the avoidance of Galilee proper and the hasty flight from Dalmanutha—but it will not explain everything. It needs to be reinforced and in part replaced by the recognition of the need Jesus had of getting His disciples alone. It does not account for His dread of the miracle in places where Antipas certainly could not touch Him, and the obvious suggestion to account for this is that the miracle always produced a crowd of admirers—and the crowd was the thing that Jesus most had to avoid. He knew that it was no use to try and teach multitudes; He must get His disciples to Himself and give them as much as they were capable of assimilating. How little that was the sequel shows. Yet it was enough, and it was attained in those hours when, temporarily and incompletely, Jesus was successful in His quest of privacy.

Questions on Chapter V

1. Do you believe that there were real devils in the Gerasene sufferer and that they really entered the swine and drowned them?
2. Do you think that the daughter of Jairus was really dead?
3. Was it *impossible* for Jesus to work miracles in Nazareth? If He was divine, was there anything that He could not do?

4. Are Christian teachers, evangelists in this country and missionaries abroad, still called upon to accept the conditions laid upon the Twelve on their mission ?
5. Can you explain the " nature miracles " on the same line as those of exorcism and healing ?
6. Which explanation of the wanderings of Jesus appeals to you most ?

Chapter VI

THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

(Mark viii. 27—xi. 11.)

It can hardly be said that Jesus had been wholly successful in His quest of privacy for Himself and His disciples. Yet they had been with Him, and while He had had little opportunity for giving them direct instruction, it may be assumed that they had had plenty of opportunity of studying Him. In the course of His wanderings He had reached Bethsaida (Bethsaida Julias, on the eastern side of the Jordan, near the point where it enters the Sea of Galilee), and, as usual, had been driven thence by a miraculous cure that He had performed. This time He moved further towards the north east, in the direction of Cæsarea Philippi. In the district—for He does not seem to have entered the city itself—He asked the crucial question, the question on whose answer turned the whole success and future of His life. He led up to it by asking what opinions about Him were held by people in general. The replies were not unsatisfactory, and He went on to ask the personal opinion of His disciples. Their reply, given through Peter, was clear and decisive. They had no doubt about Him ; *He was the Christ.*

It may be worth while to think a moment again of what that implied to them. They had been brought up on the hopes of Israel, hopes which centred in the conception of the Messiah. For six centuries the Jews had been a conquered people. They had had more than one master, but it was only at rare intervals that they had attained a measure of temporary independence.

And they were a race who had looked forward, not merely to independence, but to dominion. As time passed the conviction had deepened that there would be a great political upheaval which would reverse the position, and, instead of leaving them the subjects of the world power, would place them upon the summit in control of all humanity. This revolution was to be accomplished under the leadership of a new and greater Judas Maccabæus. It was clear that the old and normal methods were inadequate, and miraculous divine help would be given. The Messiah, when He came, would have at His disposal, not merely the armed forces of Israel, but also the heavenly host. And these He would use to overthrow His enemies and those of His people. The disciples had seen enough of the authority of Jesus to credit Him with this superhuman power, and they seemed to have believed when this admission of faith was made, that all that was now needed was to march on Jerusalem and there inaugurate the new Kingdom.

The extent to which Jesus Himself shared these views is a matter of dispute. It may be more convenient to postpone the question till another time in the history. But it is quite clear that they did not sum up all that He felt about His own Messiahship. His conception of the Kingdom of God had comparatively little of the material and the political in it. Whilst He always maintained (as far as we know) that the Jew had the first claim on the Kingdom,* He was no mere nationalist. He had before Him the conception of a spiritual Kingdom, in which the Will of God was the supreme, dominant, unchallenged factor in all human affairs. But His main difference from His followers lay in His view of the means whereby the Kingdom was to come. They thought of something spectacular and splendid. He knew that it could only come through the way of

* See again J. R. Coates, Op. cit.

the Cross. These two views were necessarily in conflict, and the contrast between them forms the main *motif* of the rest of the Gospel story. First there was the difference between Jesus and His disciples, then that between Him and the Jewish crowds, but the ground of the struggle was the same. Those who knew Him best did not understand Him, and in a certain sense it is true to say that He had to die a death of agony and shame in order to prove His position. There is no one aspect or explanation which sums up the whole of the Cross, nor is there any limit to the ways in which it may bear on human thought and life. Yet, as the story is told, this feature is the one which emerges most clearly from the historical narrative of Mark.

The conflict in the point of view comes out at once. The disciples had learnt the first lesson, the personal one of devotion to their Master. They had recognised in Him the Messiah ; they had now to learn—if they could—what manner of Messiah He was. It is important to note that at this point an entirely new element in the teaching of Jesus appears. Jesus was not ready for the crowds to acclaim Him and to enthrone Him by violence, as a Galilæan crowd would have loved to do. He therefore enjoined secrecy on the Twelve, while He at once began with the next lesson. He was to go up to Jerusalem. So far His plans would accord with their expectations. But it was not to claim His throne. Instead of triumph He would find suffering. Instead of enthusiastic acceptance by the people's leaders He would meet with rejection. Instead of victory He would meet with death, but a death which would be the gate of a new life. Yet even in that He would not promise them that their conception of the Kingdom of God would find its fulfilment. There was no doubt as to His language. He did not use metaphor, nor did He whisper His words. Bold and clear came the statement that He must be rejected and killed.

And immediately one is conscious of the conflict. Peter caught hold of Him—the action is reported as being probably characteristic—and tried to correct Him. The suggestion is that the disciple took the words as a pessimistic expression of fear, and that Peter wanted to reassure Him that they would all stand by Him, and that they believed that He would come through with victory. This was a point of view which Jesus could not accept. He turned at once and sharply condemned the attitude of the disciples. "Get thee behind me" is probably a misunderstanding of an Aramaic idiom which simply meant "get back," "get away." One gets the impression that the temptation was very real to Jesus Himself. He felt that He had the power to win the Kingdom in the expected way, but that it would not be the true way. He was conscious of the ability to escape the agony which He foresaw, but that would have been to surrender His true purpose. The disciples were thinking on the human plane; He could do that too but He must not. He must think on the divine plane.

This, however, marked the second turning point in His ministry. The Twelve had learnt to regard Him as the Messiah; it was as much as they ever could learn till the further lesson was brought home to them in practical form by the Cross. Every possible opportunity would be taken to foretell and illustrate that Cross, but now the direct step might be taken. There was no more need for privacy; Jesus could start on that last journey to Jerusalem which was to end on Calvary. The first sign of this is the deliberate change in His methods. It is hardly possible that the next step was taken without any interval. Jesus was alone with His disciples, apparently, when the great confession was made. In the next sentences (viii. 34—ix. 1) He is at least within call of the crowd. But the proximity of the two phrases is intended, one would

judge, to imply that the new departure was the direct result of their acceptance of Him as the Messiah. Only once since iii. 6 has Mark recorded an appeal to the general public on His part, and that was when He had a special attack to make on the Pharisees. But now there is no longer need for seclusion. He is about to go up to Jerusalem, and is making a public proclamation of the conditions on which He is prepared to accept recruits.

Apart from the actual terms of this proclamation there is one point of considerable interest about it. Though Jesus has forbidden His disciples to speak of Him as the Messiah, it is clear that His statement is based on the assumption that He is the Christ. Otherwise there would be no point in speaking about following or, indeed, in making the proclamation at all. And it is not unreasonable to suppose that the crowd which did actually follow Him from Galilee were well aware of the work He had to do, though they could have known no more than the Twelve of His manner of doing it. One may suspect once more that the Twelve had not been wholly discreet in the way they had talked about Him.

Be that as it may, there can be little doubt as to the situation assumed by the proclamation. Its terms alone would make that clear. It forms a summons to those who would see the reign of the Messiah, and were ready to participate in the task of establishing the Kingdom of God. Further, in these verses Jesus lays down the simple rules which form the basis of all His ethics. In fact there may be said to be only one rule—that of self-denial. This emphatically did not mean that Jesus wanted all His followers to go without sugar in their tea for a week and put the money thus saved into the missionary box. However praiseworthy such an action may be, it is superficial, and when Jesus spoke of self-denial, He had in view something

fundamental. People were to refuse to recognise themselves at all. Their motives for action were to exclude altogether thoughts about themselves. Their own profit, advantage, interests, wishes—these things were not to count at all; they were to forget that they existed. A snob may say of persons of lower rank that they do not exist; so the follower of this unique Messiah must refuse to take himself into account under any circumstances. This needs to be appreciated if some of the phrases in the rest of this passage are to be understood.

But this complete abandonment and disownment of oneself is only the first step. It is as necessary as a preliminary measure to empty oneself, but only in order that one may be filled with the enthusiasm of a great purpose and a clear goal. That purpose and goal will inevitably involve crucifixion—suffering and shame as intense as they may be made. So sure is this sooner or later that, as Jesus put it, it will be advisable to carry the cross with one, for there is no saying when it may be needed. He had given His disciples to understand what it was that lay in front of Him; He now offered the whole world the same conditions as He had already accepted.

This is borne out by the remainder of the passage. There is one philological remark that should be made in approaching it. The two words "life" and "soul" represent the same Greek word, and this in turn is a rendering of an Aramaic idiom which would be understood as a reflexive pronoun. So "Anyone who seeks to save *himself* will ruin *himself*"—"What good will it do a man to win the whole world and lose *himself?* Or what price can a man pay that will buy *himself* back when once he has lost himself?" It is the simplest way of expressing the profound truth that self-realisation is only to be achieved through self-abnegation. On this hangs all the moral teaching of Jesus. It is

His explanation of what He meant by self-denial. It is a complete and utter self-surrender that He has in view, and nothing less will satisfy Him.

But at the same time Jesus was quite ready to insist that the aim would be achieved by these means. He believed in the coming of the Kingdom, and it seems that He expected that coming at no great distance of time. He looked forward beyond the suffering to the point where He could "look away out of the agony of his soul and be satisfied by his knowledge." * Later generations, with the conception of Jesus as a person of infinite knowledge, have been hard put to it to explain this and other passages, notably such as the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel. It has been assumed that when Jesus spoke of the coming of the Kingdom and of its establishment on earth, He was thinking of the liberation from sin which His sacrificial death would secure. Others have postponed the Kingdom to the circumstances and conditions of the life after death. Others have supposed that He had the fall of Jerusalem, yet forty years distant, in His thought. Others have seen in His words a prophecy of the transfiguration which was immediately to follow. Others again, have called attention to the rapid growth and spread of Christianity through the ancient world. But our own generation is inclined to look on all these explanations as forced and therefore inadequate. There is a suspicion that the Incarnation itself would be incomplete unless the Incarnate God took on Him the full *intellectual* limitations of humanity, that Jesus, though His spiritual and ethical outlook was in full harmony—indeed was identical with the best that human intelligence ever could hold, still thought of many things in the same terms as those who were round about Him.

* Isaiah liii. 11. This passage clearly held an important place in the thinking of Jesus, who seems to have been the first to give it a Messianic interpretation.

Hence His ready acceptance of the natural science of His day, the views of the identity of the Old Testament writers, of demonology and of many other things which to-day we should (to say the least of it) describe in different ways. One may, if one likes, speak in cavilling spirit of " mistakes," and attempt to substitute a fallible human being for an infallible divine Incarnation, but it is surely permissible to retort that any adequate revelation of the Will and Being of God must be made in terms which will appeal to the period in which it appears. The ultimate truth must always be held in solution if it is to be applicable to human nature, and those who believe in the living presence of the Holy Spirit will trust Him to guide the Church in which He dwells rightly to crystallise out that truth and redissolve it in terms which each progressive generation can make its own.

There will, however, be many who will hesitate to take such a plunge as this point of view involves, and other explanations, such as those suggested above, are possible. Whatever view of this point is held, it is clear that Jesus was promising to those about Him that some of them should soon have evidence of the coming of that Kingdom. And whether this was what Jesus had in view or no, the next incident, that of the Transfiguration (Mark ix. 2-13) must have served to confirm the newly expressed faith of the disciples. One notices that only three of them are concerned—apparently there was already a tendency to form an inner ring, which has been suggested by the fact that these three alone were present at the raising of the daughter of Jairus. Then they had seen Jesus in unique power, now they see Him in unique glory. The exact character of the experience it is no longer possible to describe. As in the case of other " miracles " it may be found possible to discover an explanation which will not demand the introduction of a superhuman element. It may, for instance, be

suggested that the disciples were confused and half hypnotised by mist on the mountain side, and that all thought that they saw things which existed in their own minds only. In other words, believing Him to be the Christ, they were ready to see and to accept a unique vision of Jesus. Some support for this suggestion may be found in the fact that they recognised Moses and Elijah at once. We have no evidence that there were even traditional representations of the ancient heroes of Israel which would make it possible for them to be so surely identified. Such identification appears to have been necessarily intuitive, and would point to an experience as subjective as (though more real than) those which come to us in dreams. At the same time, there will not be a few readers of the narrative who will feel that rationalising of this kind can only detract from the real power of the story, and that the record is to be accepted at its face value. In any case the main purpose and place of this incident are clear. It came just at the point when something definite and emphatic was needed to secure to the disciples the conviction that Jesus was the Christ.

Once more there is the rigorous injunction to silence. Jesus seemed in this last period of His life to have one great fear—that men would recognise in Him the Messiah, and would insist on trying to establish His Kingdom in their way and not in His. They suspected, and possibly more than suspected, but till He reached Jerusalem, and the course of events was beyond the control of the Galilæan crowd, no public act or word of His was allowed to support the suspicion. Yet to His own immediate circle He never attempted to assume any other position than that of the Messiah, and the last sentences of the Transfiguration story show how He cleared from the minds of the three a doubt and a difficulty they had felt about the promised fore-runner.

At the foot of the mountain there was a demoniac to be healed—the experience of most people would regard this as typical, for the moments of highest exaltation are those which often make us most conscious of the presence of evil within and without (ix. 14-29). The incident is apparently introduced in order to show that though the Twelve had attained to some power in exorcism, there were yet cases which were too hard for them, and these could only be dealt with by the authority of their Master.

His next resting-place was again Capernaum (ix. 30-50). Again He took precautions to secure secrecy, and this time seems to have attained a certain amount of success. At any rate He was able to have some private conversation with the Twelve. It was all concerned with the character of the new Kingdom. He began with a repetition of what He had already said as to His own prospects and fate. To them this was still absolutely unintelligible, and they lacked the courage to discuss the matter with Him. But, in another form, it was raised almost immediately by Jesus Himself. He asked what they had been discussing on the road. The subject had been the relative positions they should occupy in the new Kingdom. This was most natural. If their point of view is remembered, it will be seen that the first question that would arise in thinking about the new Kingdom would be "But who is going to be the Prime Minister or the Grand Vizier?" This gave Jesus His opportunity. The child incident is but the preliminary to the laying down of the new social law—perhaps the most astounding paradox that He ever uttered, at least to the understanding of His immediate audience. To the oriental mind the "great" person—and the phrase is common over all the East to this day—is the person who gives orders and is waited on by other people. Jesus says in effect, "In the Kingdom of God the exact opposite is the case. The

criterion of value and position is the spirit of service. No person can attain to eminence unless he adopts the attitude of the domestic servant. The supreme height is out of reach except to one who is prepared to make himself the *slave* of the whole community. The man who would be a true member of this Kingdom must abandon all his own claims to consideration. He will have duties but no rights; he will have responsibilities but no priviliges." One needs to appreciate the Eastern point of view in order to realise the amazing inversion of the social basis that such a pronouncement involves. And it may well be that all the Christian centuries have failed hitherto to bring the principle home thoroughly to the West.

There followed some talk of a most illuminating kind. Two questions were raised. The first deals with the friends and enemies of Jesus. Once more He makes clear cut distinctions. There are, to His insight, no half measures and no strips of neutral ground. Men are either for Him or against Him, and whether a man is in the immediate company of the Twelve or not, his line is taken, and he is either friendly or hostile. Once more one feels that here the Twelve may have scented a possible rival in the power that was shortly to come to them. The second subject illustrated the strenuous nature of the demands which were made by the conditions of the new Kingdom. It was worth everything else a man could have, and nothing should be allowed to stand in its way. The Will of God is the supreme fact in life, that is all that the followers of Jesus can or ought to think about. The only virtue in salt is that it is salty; if it loses that quality, there is no remedy and no use for it. If the disciples allowed selfish and personal thoughts to obscure their great aim, they too had lost their savour.

With such samples of the talk of Jesus and the Twelve, the evangelist passes to the actual journey to

Jerusalem. This too is a series of illustrations of the revolutionary character of the new Kingdom. He is first met by Pharisees, who ask Him a question about the relations between the sexes in marriage. The reply of Jesus (x. 1-12) shows that once more He has cut away from all the traditional views of the subject. It is no mere formula that makes marriage, He says. When two people are really married, it is God and not man who has joined them together. And, what is more Jesus goes so far as to place the two sexes on absolutely equal terms. There is none of that pagan view (of which elements still linger) of the inferiority of woman and her position as a thing rather than as a person. Jesus sees sex from God's point of view, and demands for marriage its due recognition as the holiest personal relationship on earth.

The fundamental novelty of the Kingdom appears to be the meaning of the next incident, the blessing of the children (x. 13-16). It throws light, of course, on the tenderness of the character of Jesus, but His fondness for babies is not the only feature that appears in the narrative. The child character has been stressed a good deal in thinking of this story. But there is more than this in Jesus' point of view. He is trying to make it clear that when one enters the Kingdom of God, one has to start life afresh, and start at the beginning. There is much that one learns as one grows up. All this must be forgotten. One is in a new world altogether. A new meaning and aim for life must be achieved. Readers of Browning will remember that when the Arab physician meets Lazarus, forty years after his being raised from the dead, the thing that strikes him most is the entirely different outlook on life that the "madman" has found. His child's illness or death means little or nothing to him; a chance speech of the lad's may strike him with horror, as though some awful secret were about to be revealed, some spell

uttered which might devastate the universe. It is this discovery of a new scale of values which is inevitable in the new life. One must unlearn all that one has ever learnt, or one will be utterly incapable of appreciating the Kingdom of God.

A case of this new standard of values occurs almost immediately. It is the question of money. The story of the rich youth (x. 17-31) and the comments made by Jesus on him and his like are too well known to need repetition. There are, however, one or two points connected with the narrative which do bear directly on the character of the new Kingdom. It is frequently pointed out that the young man was kept out of the Kingdom because he was unwilling to lose his property. That is true, but it is equally true that Jesus did not ask for the money. Most churches, one fears, would be glad to welcome a millionaire, but if they asked him to come as a poor man, they would at least suggest that he might so distribute his wealth as to be of financial service to them. But this is not what Jesus wants. The man must get rid of all he has, and come into the circle of Jesus with nothing. Jesus will have the man, but He will not have his money. This the disciples utterly failed to understand. Their ideas of the Messiah's Kingdom were bound up with politics and economics—queer politics and poor economics no doubt —and this sudden inversion of all the value of money was a real shock to them. If a wealthy man could not, by gifts of his money, purchase an entrance into the Kingdom, what hope was there for anybody? Jesus answers that the salvation of the wealthy is a miracle, possible only to divine power. The entry to the Kingdom is not an easy thing, and it is one which God Himself alone can make possible. It need not be remarked that numerous attempts have been made to tone down the severity of this dictum. To get the largest of familiar animals through the smallest of

familiar holes has seemed an impossibility, so various interpretations—none of which carries the least conviction to an unbiased reader—have been offered for this phrase. But there is no reason to doubt that Jesus meant what He said. He simply turned on to the situation the microscope of His insight, and the incongruity between property and the Kingdom of God was obvious. The contrast between the attitude of this young man and that of the disciples was at once drawn by Peter, and he received the answer that those who had made sacrifices for the sake of Jesus and His messages would not fail to be rewarded in kind. Once more one is tempted to feel that Jesus was speaking in terms of His own day and of the thought of His audience rather than of the ultimate. Men who forsake all for Christ's sake do win far more than they lose, but the gain is not always in so tangible a form as the reply of Jesus would suggest.

The life of Jesus was a busy one, on this last journey as at other times. Yet there were moments when His thoughts were free. On such occasions the realisation of what was before Him came upon Him with overwhelming force. What He thought or felt in detail is hidden from us, but one short paragraph illustrates His state of mind with that dramatic effect which we have learnt to associate with this evangelist (x. 32-34). We catch a glimpse of the face of Jesus, not directly, but as reflected in the minds of His followers. He was going in front of them, and such were His manner and expression that those who saw Him were awed and even frightened. It is but seldom that we are allowed to contemplate the nervous strain of Jesus. But this glimpse gives us the whole thing. Not merely do we see His face; we see those of others, and they tell us something of the agony of soul through which He was passing. In the most profound reality He was bearing His Cross. The subject of His thoughts appears at

once, when He calls the Twelve apart for a moment and tells them for the third time on record of what He must pass through.

Yet the last of the qualities which the stereotyped eschatology of the day permitted to the disciples was an imaginative sympathy. Whilst the mind of Jesus was thus filled with the thought of what He must soon endure, they could only see the coming glory, and see it in their own way. Once more an attempt was made to settle the question of the Grand Vizier. This time it was a request, proffered by the mother of James and John. But it was the old question, and it led to a restatement of the same doctrine, that the only claim any man can have to high position in the Kingdom, is bound up with his self-forgetfulness and his passion for service. Yet even as He said it, Jesus was more conscious of the Cross than of anything else, and the first question which He put to the two aspirants was as to whether they were prepared to suffer as He must. That at least He could promise them, but no more. And His service was more than service, it was sacrifice. For the immediate purpose it was enough to say that He had come to wait on others, not to be waited on Himself, but as His thoughts were running the mention of the Cross seemed inevitable.

The route taken by Jesus was the normal one for Jews going from Galilee to Jerusalem. It involved a double crossing of the Jordan, in order to avoid the pollution of Samaria. The second fording of the river took place near Jericho, and there Jesus healed a blind man. There is now no attempt at concealment. The man is cured in the sight of everybody, and takes his place in the train of the followers of Jesus. The change is probably due to the proximity to Jerusalem. There was no longer any reason why He should not be recognised as the Messiah. It was no part of His purpose to die as a mere criminal, though He must take a

criminal's place and bear a criminal's fate. It was essential to His aim that, being the Messiah, and in that character expressly, He should suffer the most degrading penalty with which the ancient world was acquainted. And so, not merely did Jesus perform this public miracle towards the end of His journey, He arranged for a spectacular and processional entry into the city which was to witness the consummation of His life's work (xi. 1-11). It is not impossible that this had been long in His mind, and that there was some agreement between Jesus and the owners of the beast on which He rode. Whether that be so or not, it is clear that He meant there should be no doubt about the part He was playing. He was entering Jerusalem, and entering the city with a great crowd behind Him. He had deliberately, with the recognised Messianic passage, Zechariah ix. 9, in mind, adopted a royal state, and accepted royal honours paid to Him by His followers. It is true that they themselves had not the remotest conception of what His real sovereignty was like. But, just as His disciples had recognised His character a few weeks before, so now the whole mass of those who were about Him formally and enthusiastically proclaimed it. Both together would have to learn what manner of Messiah this was, who could only seek a throne through the Cross.

So the story moves forward from this point with the dramatic gloom of the inevitable. The end is already clear. Such a conflict of aims can have but one issue. The idealism can only combat the materialism by submitting to the last and decisive test. It must admit a temporary or rather a seeming defeat of the most crushing and perfect kind. The forces of this world must do all that they can possibly do. They must oppose, betray, neglect, condemn, destroy. Yet will their triumph be all in vain, and the pure spiritual faith will prove its victory to be the more complete and final

inasmuch as the whole concentrated power of evil has utterly and for ever failed. So the future. But for the present the tragic element dominates the reader's thought, and the whole scene darkens into a blackness relieved only by the spiritual majesty and the moral splendour of the central figure.

Questions on Chapter VI

1. How does the teaching of Jesus compare to your mind with that of others amongst the world's religious and moral leaders ?
2. How far do the principles of Jesus as laid down in Mark viii. 34-37 offer a complete guide to life ?
3. Would you have understood Jesus any better than His disciples did ?
4. Could Jesus have taught His disciples what He meant by the Kingdom of God without being crucified ?
5. How do you think that Jesus really expected the Kingdom to come ?
6. Is the Christian ideal compatible with the existence of private property ? Or is it only excessive wealth which so nearly disqualifies a man for entrance into the Kingdom of God ?

Chapter VII

JESUS IN JERUSALEM (Mark xi. 12—xiii. 37)

It was already late in the afternoon when Jesus entered Jerusalem. For that day it was enough to have made the royal entry. His further action must be postponed till the morrow. Accordingly He looked round the city, with all its various activities and thronging crowds, and went back to Bethany for the night. Though the fact is not expressly stated, the narrative of Mark is unintelligible unless we assume this to have been His practice throughout the whole time He was in the neighbourhood. If one may guess at a reason, it will probably be a similar one to that which made Jesus withdraw Himself from the Tetrarchy of Galilee when the determination of Herod to put Him out of the way became obvious. Jerusalem, with its crowded streets, offered opportunities for assassination, and to have Him shut within the city walls at night would have made arrest easy. But the time chosen by Jesus was a special one. It must be the Passover, and He was not prepared to risk His life before the moment arrived. He therefore remained outside the city by night, coming in each morning, and returning to Bethany every evening.

The first incident noted in this period took place on the way to the city on the first morning. It is the famous cursing of the fig tree, and it needs to be completed by the inclusion of the sequel, which followed

the next morning on the return of the party from Bethany (xi. 12-14, 20-25). Not a few readers find a difficulty in the passage. Some have even felt it to be a blot on His character, seeing in it the use of His superhuman power in a peevish act of revenge for His disappointment. But Jesus used the incident as an illustration of the power of faith—if indeed the remark about the uprooted mountain is to be taken as applied to this incident. And, further, it is not unfair to regard it as an acted parable. A tree without fruit is useless, and a life without character is equally useless. Their fate is one. The comment made by the evangelist to the effect that it was too early for figs should dispose of the idea that this was merely a violent expression of personal disappointment. One brought up in the country as Jesus was—though He was no farmer—would not have made a serious error as to the season. It is clear that His motive in approaching the tree was misunderstood, either by an observer or by the historian, and that His real purpose was to draw some lesson, possibly that suggested here.

If this latter interpretation be the true one, it may well be that Jesus intended it to apply with particular force to the Judaism of His day. For His first act on entering Jerusalem was one which, while it had a practical bearing and probably a place in the development of events, yet is not fully understood till it is seen to be a condemnation of the religion of His time. The story, with its suggestion of strength and even violence is one of the best known amongst the Gospel narratives. The point of it lies in the two quotations from Isaiah lvi. and Jeremiah vii. which Jesus put together to explain His action and to point its moral. The first of these is one which brings out at once the universality and the exclusiveness of Judaism. "My house shall be called a house of prayer *for all nations*," the prophet had said. That is to say, the God of the Jew was unlike

the gods of the other nations. They were unreal, whilst He was the one living and true God. And the function of the Jew in the scheme of the world's faith was to spread this knowledge and to bring all other races of men into touch with Him who alone was the right object of their soul's desire. At the same time this reference calls attention to the exclusiveness of the Jew. Other nations might worship in many places. There were shrines everywhere to the unreal gods. To the one living and true God there was only the one. It was true that He might be found everywhere, and in every place where the Jew was established a place of prayer might be found. But it must be remembered that to the ancient mind worship was always incomplete unless it involved or consisted in sacrifice. This was not the peculiarity of the Jew, it was felt in all other religions also. And though prayer might be offered anywhere, sacrifice was only possible in Jerusalem. And even in Jerusalem it was confined to the Temple itself. By using these words Jesus said in effect, "You claim that you alone have had a special revelation of the only real God. You say that He can be worshipped here and here alone in full completeness. What facilities do you offer to the rest of the world to enable them to share in this unique but universal privilege?" And His answer is one of the most terrible of the many terrible things He said—"You have made it a brigands' den."

Rightly to understand these words one must go back to Jeremiah. A century before his time Isaiah had taught (amongst much else) that the Temple and the city which held it were inviolable. It would seem that the rest of the great prophet's message had slipped men's minds, but this remained, and had illustrated the rule that the truth of one age may become the falsehood of the next. For Jeremiah's contemporaries believed that no matter what iniquities they committed,

their God would preserve them. They might sin as they pleased, and retort to every threat of punishment "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these." And with that parrot-cry they comforted themselves and sallied out to fresh forms of wrong. In other words they used their faith just as brigands use their cave. It is not the place where their depredations are committed; it is that which gives them shelter when they are pursued and enables them to continue in their evil courses with impunity.

And this was to some extent what the Temple was to the Jews of Jesus' day. The Temple was built on a large irregular quadrilateral platform, which formed the Outer Court, where the buying and selling went on. This was the only portion of the sacred enclosure to which Gentiles were admitted. On this platform there stood the sanctuary proper. It was raised above the rest, and the next court was approached by a flight of fourteen steps. Some distance outside the foot of the steps ran a balustrade of stone, and on this balustrade were fixed at intervals notices carved on stone tablets. These notices threatened death to any foreigner who should be caught inside the balustrade. This meant that, as against the Gentile, the Temple was sanctuary. Such sanctuaries are not usually inhabited by the best of men. Those who carried on their business in the outer court of the Temple were not merely commercially minded men, they were men who did not dare show their faces in Rome or Ephesus or Alexandria, men who had the best of reasons for being in reach of safety. And one can imagine that from time to time a Gentile would track down some Jew who had cruelly wronged him, and find him at last in this court. But the hand outstretched to arrest him would be met by a sudden blow. A few hasty steps and a leap over the balustrade, and the pursuer would be left

LS.130

helpless, face to face with a swearing, spitting fury whom he could not touch. It is possible that Jesus had seen some such incident as this on the previous evening, and had marked the profound incongruity between the profession of the Jew and his actual practice. For these people, instead of making it easy, or even possible for all nations to worship in that house, were simply using it to secure impunity for criminals of their own race. In other words, the charge involved in Jesus' action and quotations is this. Instead of fulfilling their true destiny, and enabling all men to worship the one living and true God, they had filled His solitary shrine with the moral scum and offscourings of their own people. Such a condition was the most terrible abuse of their privileged position.

An action like the cleansing of the Temple could not go unchallenged. It is not impossible that there was a certain source of revenue in the traders in the Temple, and it may be almost taken for granted that a fee was paid by each of them to somebody. But further, Jesus had implicitly set up a claim to authority —the same feature as had already appeared in Galilee. A political Messiah was one thing, a Messiah who made it His first business to interfere with established Jewish custom was another. A Messiah should have begun on the Romans and other foreigners, not on Jews! It would seem that Jesus had at least the approval of large numbers. Otherwise it is difficult to understand why more drastic action was not taken immediately. But the leaders of the people contented themselves with approaching Jesus on His second morning in the Temple, and asking Him to produce a warrant or some other sign which would show that He had a right to dispose of the use of the Temple courts. It is not impossible that His teaching also had given rise to suspicion and hostility, and His credentials on that score were being questioned. But, as Mark

tells the story, it is rather the cleansing of the Temple, with all the claims which it involved, which was the cause of the question.

It appears that they were not really asking for information. If they wanted an answer at all it would be one which would incriminate Him either with the Jewish religious authorities or with the Roman civil power. And it is to be noted that they have no answer. Instead, Jesus, in military phrase, took the offensive, and proceeded to challenge His inquisitors as to their right to ask questions. It was open to Him to have answered that the authority which He possessed was derived from a divine source, but He did not make that answer. He asked them a question to which they dared not reply. It concerned the authority which underlay the baptism of John. Incidentally this would seem to point to a comparatively short ministry of Jesus, for it did not begin till after the imprisonment of John, and the facts were still much in the minds of the people. And because they were fairly fresh, these men were unable to answer. One form of reply would show them to be in the wrong, and therefore give Jesus an opportunity of retorting on them, the other opened up possibilities which they could feel but did not need to describe. Again Mark, with his broken sentence draws the very expression on their faces. "Are we to say, Of men? . . . !" That course, at least, was impossible. So they compromised, and gave Jesus the right to refuse to give any answer at all, on the obvious ground that His questioners were not competent to deal with the case.

But Jesus did not stop there. He was not content merely to repel an attack; He Himself in turn uttered a condemnation on His enemies. This took the form of the familiar parable of the wicked husbandmen (xii. 1-12). Whilst it shared with other parables the element of disguise, in this particular case the aim was

sufficiently clear. For Jesus started with what was at least a reference to the well-known Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah v., a song which, as it stands in the book of the prophet, was a direct condemnation of the leaders of the people. From that point they must have understood the meaning of the whole. There could be no doubt as to His attitude.

It may be worth while noting that during this short Jerusalem period, there is no indication of the growth of Pharisaic hostility such as one finds in the Galilæan ministry. The enmity of the nobility and clergy and others seems to have been assumed by Jesus from the moment of His arrival in the capital. And, as Mark tells the story, even in the first instance the challenge came from Him and not from them. Of the parties in the Jewish state, He had known the Pharisees and Scribes in Galilee. They were not the actual party in power in Jerusalem, though their influence with the people was probably very great. The Priests at this time were mainly of the Sadducees, and in so far as there were any of the functions of the government left to the Jews at all, it was in their hands that the power would lie. The general character of Jewish religion in His day, Jesus appears to have gauged from His first glimpse of the city on the evening of His triumphal entry, and this He expressed in no uncertain terms in the cleansing of the Temple. He had foreseen and foretold the rejection with which He would meet at the hands of all parties. His conception of religion, of the function of Judaism in the divine plan for the world and of the coming Kingdom of God were such as to bring Him sooner or later into direct opposition to the established powers, and He did not wait for their hostility to grow. He assumed it, and events showed that the assumption was fully justified. With the Sadducee creed, Jesus had little in common, beyond the basis of an ethical monotheism. As we have already seen, He might have

found more sympathy amongst the Pharisees*—as indeed He seems to have done—but His claims to authority over against the stereotyped tradition were more than they could bear. The result was that He had both of the two great parties in the Jewish community against Him, and though for a time He held the interest and even the enthusiasm of the mass of the common people, it was inevitable that this weak support would soon break and pierce Him as it broke. But for the moment He had them on His side, and it was not safe for His enemies to take overt action against Him. Two courses were open to them. Either they must catch Him alone and arrest Him—a proceeding rendered difficult by His absence from the city at night—or they must discredit Him with the crowds. It was the latter method which they first attempted.

Their next move, then, was for the Pharisees and the Herodians to join forces. The import of this alliance has already been noted, and once more it serves to illustrate the terrible strength of the hostility which the Pharisees felt towards Jesus. Their method was to approach Him together, bringing before Him a question on which He was practically certain to antagonise one party or the other. Two school boys, when they wish to make life a burden for some smaller boy will sometimes go to him and compel him to commit himself to saying that one is " better " than the other. If he admits that A is the superior, then B claims that he has been insulted and that he has the right of vengeance. If, on the other hand, it is B who secures the victim's verdict, then the power of punishment devolves on A. The problem which the new allies brought to Jesus was something of this character and was intended to place Him in a similar dilemma. They asked Him whether it was lawful to render tribute

* For a complete statement of this point of view see Dr. I. Abraham's book, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels.*

to Cæsar or not. If He said yes, He would give the Pharisees a handle which they could use against Him with the mob. They would be able to represent Him as being on the unpatriotic side, and on the irreligious side, for the action would be tantamount to the admission of the rights of the conquering people and of all (such as Herod) who derived their authority from Rome. This might help to undermine His influence, and perhaps even lead to some popular demonstration against Him which would in the end cost Him His life. On the other hand a reply which would gratify the Pharisees and secure His position as a popular leader, would in the long run bring down on Him the vengeance of the civil power, and He might be publicly accused before the Roman tribunals as a rebel.

The way in which Jesus dealt with the question is familiar to everybody. He did not give a direct answer. In fact it would not be unfair to say that He gave no answer at all, but threw back the responsibility of making the decision on the questioners themselves. To render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's is the dictate of the simplest form of honesty, and no one could quarrel with it. They knew as much as that before. What they had now to do was to apply to the accepted position the labour of deciding what did belong to Cæsar and what did belong to God. In other words Jesus simply told them to use their own common sense—a thing He not infrequently urged on people. In this case the answer was complete, and there was no possibility either of basing any charge on His words or of submitting supplementary questions.

The failure of this combined attack left another party its opportunity of approaching Jesus. These new opponents were Sadducees. They asked Him a riddle which is said to have been a commonplace of the schools of His day, regarding the marriage relation

in the Resurrection. However familiar the question may have been, the reply of Jesus was certainly novel. He simply denied the fundamental assumption on which the whole discussion was based, and asserted that in the new birth the sex question did not exist, since such distinctions did not survive. To an age in which woman was regarded as being essentially a lower order of being, in which the Jew thanked God that he was a Jew and not a Gentile, a free man and not a slave, a man and not a woman, the position was nothing less than revolutionary. It is only slowly that even the Church has approached this point of view, and it is still far from being attained.

But Jesus was far from being content with a passive attitude towards the Sadducees' view of the meaning of death. He carried the war into the enemies' camp with a piece of characteristic logic. Appealing to the common ground of the Pentateuch, in which the Sadducee believed as thoroughly as any other type of Jew, He pointed out that, generations after the death of the Patriarchs, God was still their God. This was not a mere verbal victory. It is the laying down of a great principle in understanding the relations between man and God. God is believed to be eternal. He is not subject to decay or dissolution. He is deathless personality. And when once He has come into vital contact with another personality, the bond between the two must necessarily be as enduring as God Himself. "He is not the God of the dead but of the living." It is incredible that communion with such a Being can be broken by a physical event like death. Moral or spiritual failure might cut man off from Him, but not mere material destruction.

The conversation was overheard by a Scribe, who probably belonged to the Pharisaic party. The impression gained from reading Mark is that the man was perfectly sincere in asking which was the greatest

commandment in the Law. Jesus defined the greatest element in the Law as Love, shown first to God and then to man. But Jesus did not regard Love as a mere emotion. He approved of the point of view of Deuteronomy, where it is regarded as the consecration, the concentration of the whole personality. A man cannot love God with only a part of himself. He must throw his whole being into it, heart and soul and mind and strength. Then, and then alone, he will be able to fulfil the first demand of God. And with this Jesus connects love for one's fellows. This cannot be of the same absorbing quality as the first. but it is sufficiently strong if a man loves his neighbour as himself. And with this the Scribe was content, and Jesus recognised in him the possibility of the best.

Mark immediately follows this incident with two attacks on the Scribes. These, however, have no necessary connection with the question or with the questioner. They are simply illustrations of the more aggressive elements in the teaching of Jesus in the Temple. The first, which is concerned with the relation between the Messiah and David, is really a protest against the mechanical way in which the Scriptures were interpreted by the Biblical scholars of His day. A freer canon of exegesis than theirs was needed if the "Messianic" passages in the Old Testament were to be rightly understood. The second, which has a certain humour about it, is an attack on them for the conceit and failure to appreciate the real function which they should have performed. They were the people whose special studies laid a special responsibility upon them. They should have been the interpreters of the religious faith of Israel. They had knowledge and they had privilege. Knowledge and privilege carry with them duties and obligations. But the men whom Jesus saw stalking about to be looked at were indifferent to duties and obligations. Instead of regarding their

position and attainments as giving them opportunities for service and for raising the standard of the God-consciousness of their people, they only valued these things for the popular reputation which they secured for their possessors, and for the external marks of respect with which they were acknowledged.

The last incident of the public life of Jesus is that of the generous widow. There is much in it that is not obvious, partly because the story is so familiar (usually misquoted as that of the "widow's mite") and partly because the West does not realise as the East does the abject helplessness of widowhood. In oriental society woman is seldom if ever independent. She must always have a man in whose charge she lives. She is never expected to keep herself, and though there are often cases in which a woman has property which remains hers all her life, yet in the great majority of instances she has to rely on the exertions of a man to secure her living. As long as her husband lives, she is safe, but after his death, unless she has sons who are able to support her, her position is difficult and even precarious. And here the word "poor" implies a destitution almost complete.

But, even if this has not always been realised, the main lesson has never been missed. It is that the value of a gift is never absolute, it is always relative. This is so clear a fact, even in practical life, that it is unnecessary to lay any further stress upon it. Institutions of the highest and most permanent value are not those maintained by the big donations of the wealthy, but those which command the interest and support of the poor. The essence of the true gift lies in sacrifice.

Chapter xiii. stands apart from what precedes, and indeed from most of what we find elsewhere in the Gospel. It forms the great eschatological discourse of Jesus, and is sometimes called "the little Apocalypse." In recent years there has grown up a whole body of

opinion as to the character and thought of Jesus, based mainly upon this passage and on similar ones elsewhere in the Gospels. It is thought that Jesus Himself was looking for some spectacular manifestation of the Kingdom of God, which was in some ways not unlike the eschatological views of His contemporaries. He differed from them in believing that these last things would never come to pass unless the Christ were first to die. After His death He would rise again, and in no long time appear to destroy all other powers, and end the old régime in a burst of unparalleled calamity. In favour of this view there is not only much that is to be found in this and similar passages, but also the undoubted belief of the primitive Church, which lived in daily expectation of the decisive moment. On the other hand it is argued that what Jesus said here can only have referred to the coming destruction of Jerusalem, that His clear insight and political sagacity told Him that if Judaism continued on its career of materialistic patriotism, there was only one possible end, and that could not be far off. It is impossible in so sketchy a study as this to discuss such a question, but it is possible at least to get some kind of outline of the whole.

In the first place, the speech arose out of a remark made by one of the disciples, who called attention to the beauty of the Temple. Jesus replied with a prophecy of its complete destruction. Further explanations were required, and Jesus began with a somewhat general statement of the troubles which would befall the world. Not the least of these would be the appearance of false Christs—a constant feature in Palestinian politics for the next generation (vv. 1-8). There follows the warning of persecution, given to the disciples themselves (vv. 9-13). Then a description of a calamity which may be identified with the destruction of Jerusalem, and may perhaps have been coloured by the events

of the years 69 and 70. This, at least, is not strictly eschatological. There is no point in fleeing to the mountains from Judea to escape the Judgment Day. This is described in vv. 14-23. But it is followed by another passage which speaks of events which are to follow the destruction of Jerusalem. The interval will not be a long one (v. 29), but it will be filled by celestial portents, and when they are accomplished, then, as the consummation of all things, Jesus Himself will appear in His triumphant glory and will gather together His elect. The actual time is one which cannot be known by men, but when the first signs appear they must be ready, and above all must be awake and expectant (vv. 24-37).

Whilst the earlier portions of this discourse refer to the fall of Jerusalem, it is equally clear that the last section reflects the eschatological views of the day. It is of course open to argue that the language is possibly modified by the first Christian generation to suit its own ideas, but that only opens the further question as to how it came to regard those ideas as being characteristic of the teaching of Jesus. A great mass of eschatological literature was current, and what strikes one about this passage is the scantiness of the information as compared with that to be found in similar writings. The saints are to be collected, but nothing is said as to the life they will live, or the nature of the Kingdom which will be formed from them, or of the fate of those who are outside the circle of the elect. The point will readily be appreciated if a typical Apocalypse—say that preserved in our New Testament—be compared with this chapter. But for the fact that this passage is used by both Luke and Matthew (as well as another discourse of the same kind) it would be possible to suggest that it was an Apocalypse of the year 71 or thereabouts, which had been interpolated into the text. But it is quite unsafe to assume that any part

of this Gospel can have had such a history as that, especially when it belongs to the elements which were in the hands e.g. of Matthew.

On the whole the safest course seems to be to assume that here as elsewhere Jesus thought and spoke in the language of His time. Whilst the importance of this aspect of Jesus' teaching has been greatly overstressed by such writers as Schweitzer, it must be admitted to have had a place. He really does seem to have expected that in some miraculous way His Kingdom would come after His death. But, in the main, it was the death and not the triumph that filled His thought. And to that death the narrative immediately proceeds.

Questions on Chapter VII

1. Do you think that the action of Jesus in cursing the fig tree needs defence? If so, what defence would you offer?
2. Why do you think Jesus began His public ministry in Jerusalem by cleansing the Temple?
3. Mark tells us of no miracle performed by Jesus actually in Jerusalem? Why?
4. What view do you think Jesus took of sex relationships?
5. Are we justified in "dodging" awkward questions?
6. Do you think Jesus expected to return in triumph very soon after His death? If so, how far was He mistaken?

Chapter VIII

THE END—AND THE BEGINNING

(Mark xiv. 1—xvi. 8)

We have followed the historian in his record of the active and public life of Jesus. We have seen how first He won a small group, chosen out of the ordinary men who surrounded Him, and then slowly but surely trained them till they were prepared to believe first and foremost in Himself. We have watched the growth of official hostility, which compelled Him to leave the crowds who knew Him, and seek for privacy in which He might give to His own group the teaching which should fit them for the carrying on of His work after He had gone from them. And we have seen how, when once their personal allegiance was secured, He set His face for the closing tragedy, and with an audacity which excites wonder and fear, flung His final challenge in the face of all that His own age and people counted most authoritative.

Such a course of action and such an attitude could have only one end. Yet one feels as one approaches this end that one is treading upon no common ground. The death of Jesus can no more be like the death of any other than His real life was that of mortal man. He who reads the last chapters of this Gospel must read them upon his knees. He must realise that he is entering into the very holy of holies. The simple statement of the writer is couched in no extravagant language, but through this masterly dramatic reticence the

reader is gripped by an overwhelming sense of gloom, unrelieved and unmitigated. With all this there is also an atmosphere of impenetrable mystery. There *must* be more in this than the historian can exhibit—more possibly than any human thought can fathom.

It would seem that the time and the occasion were deliberately selected by Jesus Himself. He chose the Passover. We need not enter into the discussion as to the actual date of the death of Jesus or attempt to decide as between the historical accuracy of the second and fourth Gospels. Suffice it to note that the language of Mark is unintelligible unless the writer believed that the last supper was the Passover meal, and that Jesus suffered on the day following the Passover and not on the Passover day itself. But this is (except from the theological and symbolical point of view) a minor detail. The main purpose would seem to have been secured in any case if we may trust Mark's narrative. Jesus meant His death to be as public as possible. Just as His claim to Messiahship had been made by a processional entry into the capital, at a time when more Jews would be gathered there than at any other, so His final exposition of the meaning of that Messiahship and the paradoxical act whereby His apparent destruction was to inaugurate the new Kingdom, were to be made in such fashion that every one must at least be aware of the facts.

This being the case, the dramatic effect of the anointing of Jesus cannot well be over-estimated. The people are grouped and contrasted, the woman, the grumblers (not necessarily bad men; merely unimaginative ones) and Jesus Himself. Apart from all other interest the short narrative shows how completely the mind of Jesus was dominated in these days by the thought of His own approaching death. Mark does not comment on the character or on the affection of the giver, He leaves all that to be inferred from the remarks

of Jesus. And those remarks are illuminating from this point of view. But their meaning is still more clearly an indication of His own prospects. It seems that the thought of what lay before Him was so pressing that every incident was inevitably interpreted to Him in terms of it. It must be remembered that as far as we know there was no trace of comprehension or of real intellectual sympathy in any of those who were about Him. He had, it is true, the passionate devotion of the Twelve, and probably of others as well, but that devotion was absolutely blind to the true character of His work and of His Kingdom. To them these things meant thrones and crowns, war and victory. To Him it meant shame and suffering, ending only in death. One almost feels as if He snatched at anything which might show that somebody understood, however dimly, and however imperfectly. He Himself, at least, was under no misapprehension. His purpose was set, and its fulfilment to Him inevitable. Called upon to defend the woman He said in effect, "You would not think the ointment wasted if it were poured over a corpse. It might be sold, but the buyer would have no better use for it than that. I am to all intents and purposes a corpse. You may think of me as dying or even as dead. Even so, I shall live in the Gospel, and everywhere the story shall be told of how she understood and made ready. The opportunity is unique, and no one else seems to realise the fact. She does, and her deed will go down to all ages for that reason."

In startling contrast to the act of this (in Mark) unnamed woman is the next sentence, which records the treachery of Judas Iscariot. His motives have been variously explained. To most men he has seemed to be the traitor par excellence, and his name has been handed down to infamy on this ground. Others have tried to enter into his position and sympathise with his point of view. It has been suggested that he was

as well aware as any other of the power of Jesus, and that it was his hope to force his Master's hand. By this betrayal he would compel Him to declare Himself and to employ those miraculous powers which He possessed. Thus, at what Judas regarded as being the right moment, the consummation of the hopes of all Israel would be achieved. Mark suggests neither view ; he simply records what happened, though it must be admitted that the attitude of Jesus Himself, indicated later, does not favour the more charitable (and ingenious) presentation of the case. The thing was done, and in view of that tremendous fact, even the motives of the doer are insignificant. In the appalling tragedy in which he played a part, Judas himself falls almost out of sight. There is no real room in the story for anyone except Jesus.

If more were needed to heighten the sense of gloom, it would be provided by the narrative of the farewell meal which Jesus shared with His disciples. It would seem that some previous arrangement had been made between Jesus and the owner of the room. Commentators have pointed out that the sight of a man carrying water was sufficiently rare to be distinctive, inasmuch as this was normally a woman's work. This, together with the character of the message form a good enough ground for the suggestion that there was a definite appointment between Jesus and the host.

The meal is one of the best known events in the world's history. For the first time it would seem that the feeling of tragedy had communicated itself to the Twelve. They are at least brought to think, and to see that it is at least possible that all may not be as they have hitherto imagined. This effect is produced by the announcement of the betrayal. The foretelling of the crucifixion itself had left them cold, indifferent or incredulous. The statement that there was an actual traitor amongst them stirred them deeply. As Mark

tells the story they at once began to try to clear themselves individually. Though innocent, it may well be that they knew just enough of their own frailty to realise that any one of them might fall. But Jesus declined to give them the least clue, refusing to say anything which might enable them to guess at the identity of the criminal by a process of elimination. As each breaks in with " Surely you don't mean me ? " Jesus cuts the questions off short by repeating His statement with some amplification. It is to be noted that Mark gives no indication of the point at which Judas left. He is next mentioned as being with the officers who arrest Jesus, and he is certainly there at table, listening ready for an exposure of his treachery. But it does not come, and it is possible that Mark meant his readers to understand that he slipped away as they left the chamber. In that case it is clear that Judas was himself a partaker in the sacramental rite. Yet Jesus felt a certain deep sympathy for him, and in His words of regret it is impossible to find mere condemnation. Recognising that the doom which hung over him and the part that the traitor was to play were alike inevitable, He yet deplored the awful position of the instrument of destruction. Whilst the agony of His own suffering almost crushed His soul, it is perhaps not too fanciful to see in " Better for that man if he had never been born " a sense that Judas too had a cross before him, all the more terrible because it was his own sin that laid it on him, and the underlying inspiration of altruism could not be his. Jesus knew what the betrayal meant ; Judas did not know, but that knowledge was bound to be his ultimately—when it was too late.

Of the actual supper and the solemn words with which Jesus stamped it on the memory of those who sat with him, it is almost impossible to speak. There are few bodies of Christians to whom the facts do not

come home with regularity, and not a few of us find that the repetition brings with it a heightened sense of the mystery and the wonder of the Love that lies behind. As each occasion brings home to us a fresh content of meaning, expressed or inexpressible, it deepens also the sense of yet greater mystery to be explored. To attempt an adequate explanation of Jesus' words, and still more to attempt to recover the atmosphere would be to court disaster. Further, so much has been said and written on the subject, that neither a summary nor a fresh examination is here possible. Nevertheless there are one or two points to which special attention may be called, inasmuch as they rise directly out of Mark's narrative.

The first of these is that whilst Jesus Himself gave thanks for the bread which typified His own broken body, and for the wine which was the emblem of His own shed blood, He does not seem to have partaken of them Himself. This is expressly stated in the case of the wine. This means that He was conscious, and that He meant them to be conscious, of an altruistic purpose in His death. Whatever there was to be gained thereby would be gained by them and not by Him. It was His to give, even of His own life ; it was theirs to receive. This, at least, is obvious throughout the whole narrative.

The other point that lies on the surface is that Jesus expressly placed Himself in the line of the development of the world's religion. He refers deliberately to the conception which most completely fulfils the thought of Israel, on the relation between God and man—the idea of a Covenant. That theory had lain at the root of Israel's dealings with her own national God, as revealed at Sinai. As a result of the prophetic stand for righteousness it had found expression in the Book of Deuteronomy. But Deuteronomy had failed as a means of practical regeneration, and failed with amazing

rapidity. Jeremiah, who had seen the beginnings of the new order, had also witnessed the close of the age to which it was first applied, and had thereupon enunciated that great doctrine of his—perhaps the greatest thought a single Jew ever contributed to the religion of his people—*there would be a new covenant.* It would not be written, as the old had been, with mere pen and ink upon papyrus or other dead material. Such an " agreement " could never be anything more than a " scrap of paper." Instead it was to be written upon the heart, and set in men's inward parts. Doubtless Jeremiah's hope was for the recovery of the Jewish state in the little Mizpah community under Gedaliah. But that hope failed, and Israel, the world, had to wait till this night when Jesus brought it to full fruition.* For there was that which Jeremiah had not seen which was yet essential—the writing medium. Ink will do for the paper ; blood alone will lay it upon the heart. Nowhere do the startling perception of reality and the amazing appreciation of human nature which characterised Jesus appear more radiantly than here. Nothing less than death—nothing less than *His* death —would suffice to drive home the eternal lesson of the friendship of God, the suffering of God and the atoning passion of God in such form that these facts could never be erased from the human heart. And so, through all the ages, amid much misunderstanding, crude interpretation, and shallow acceptance of dogma, the supreme message of Jesus to sinful humanity has held its sway—*His blood was shed for many.*

In such a moment as this the whole heart of Jesus lay bare to those who loved Him. There was thus that gleam of light which appeared at the end of the tunnel—He would some day drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God. But there was an added pang which

* That this reference was felt by the disciples themselves is clear from the Pauline account as preserved in Luke and in I Cor. xi.

lay before Him which He must share with them. They loved Him, but they would desert Him. The last of the possible supports with which His life provided Him was soon to give way, and leave Him absolutely destitute of expressed human sympathy. Their very reception of this statement serves to illustrate the immense gulf which separated Him from those who were nearest to Him. To Him the terrible thing was inevitable; to them it was incredible. The swift response of Peter, who took the announcement in a personal way, suggests that He, at any rate, had felt almost insulted by the words of Jesus. And it is characteristic of the Twelve in the Synoptists that what Peter says the rest feel but leave unsaid, at least as far as our records go. The last thing that seemed possible to any of them was that they, with all their loving enthusiasm, should find in Jesus a "stumbling-block." Yet only an hour or two later, "they all left Him and fled." The keenness with which Jesus Himself felt the contrast between the actual situation and their view of it appears in the tense emphasis of His reply to Peter. It seems almost as if that prophecy of the denial were shaken from Him in a series of sharp jerks—"you"—(the pronoun is itself emphatic)—"to-day—this very night—before second cockcrow—thrice will deny me." And Peter's reply is not really boastful, it is rather the expression of unquestioned certitude—"Why; I would not think of denying you, even though confession were to cost me my life."

From this utter lack of comprehension Jesus had to turn to a companionship which had never failed Him and had always been at hand. A good deal is said at times about the "spiritual pilgrimage" of Jesus. As a matter of fact, it is a subject on which there is practically no evidence. It is only very rarely that we get glimpses of Jesus, or catch the sound of His voice, except when He is talking to others. And

progress observable there may be due at least as much to the growth—slow but real—in His hearers as in His own inner life. One fact certainly is clear. Throughout the whole of His life there is no trace of an instant's sense of separation from His Father. There never has been a life which exhibited from start to finish this same perfection of spiritual union with God. It will be necessary to refer again to this feature of the life of Jesus when we stand at the foot of the Cross itself, but it is well to mention it here. For in this lack of the true human fellowship Jesus turned as it were by instinct to prayer. The others, the inner circle at least, were to have one more chance of sharing in their Master's experience, though in the real struggle He must be alone. But they failed. They could not enter into His heart and see what lay there ; they could not even keep awake.

Our failure must be just as complete. We may not sleep, but we, like Peter and James and John, can only stand apart. Though the supreme agony was reserved for the next day, the fiercest battle came in the Garden. It was the culmination of all the struggle and the temptation of His life. The Cross had been always before Him. He had carried it about with Him more truly than if the actual timber had lain on His shoulder. Always there had been the grim horror of it, always there had been the shrinking, always there had been the nerve strain due to the necessity for unrelaxed effort in the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. But now the last chance had come. In a few moments as He well knew, the police would hold Him in their grasp, and thenceforward events would move of themselves, without His initiative. But, for those few moments, the opportunity for escape was still open. All the force of the battle of years, all the terror and dread, all the loathing and repulsiveness of the end were concentrated into a single sentence, " Abba,

Father, all things are possible to thee ; cause this cup to pass from me." And all the devotion, all the consecration, all the sustained tenacity of surrender culminated in the closing words " nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt." God's greatest victory on earth was won.

Meanwhile the disciples had slept, and only awakened when the actual moment of betrayal was at hand. The hasty, ill-judged and unskilful attempt at defence on the part of one of them serves to heighten the dramatic effect by affording a foil to the dignity and grandeur of Jesus Himself. Indeed the little incident would be almost comic but for the pitiful double failure it involved, the failure to understand what Jesus stood for and the failure to achieve anything efficient. Even had the Kingdom of Jesus been of this world, it could never have been won by such swordsmen—and it was not of this world at all. To the striker and his companions Jesus is silent ; it would seem as if He took no notice of them. His only words are a reproach addressed to His captors, ending with a recognition of the fact that all this was inevitable. Two short sentences record the flight of His friends, and the attempted arrest of one follower, who is by some identified with Mark.

These, one feels, are minor incidents, and the interest shifts at once to the trial before the ecclesiastical court—that of the Sanhedrin. Here an attempt is made to preserve the form of autonomy. The Old Testament laws of evidence are strictly observed. That is to say, for condemnation it was necessary that at least two witnesses should give evidence to the same offence, and be able to give it in identical terms. This created difficulties. Harmonious evidence was not easy to obtain, in spite of the fact that there were a number of persons who did their best to oblige the authorities. Even when testimony was forthcoming

to the same incident there was sufficient divergence between the witnesses to discredit them. The statement of the Evangelist is that all the evidence, even this, was false, but one would suspect that there was some truth lying behind this last item. In John ii. 19 the words "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again" are ascribed to Jesus, apparently with special reference to the story of the trial. But it is possible that we have a saying still nearer to the actual words on which the charge was based embedded in 2 Cor. v. 1. Paul's mode of introducing the words "If the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved . . . ." seems to imply that he was quoting from some authority known to himself and to his correspondents. In that case the falsification would mainly lie in the insertion of the three days and in the claim to be the person who would accomplish the restoration.

In any case, the discrepancies between the witnesses made their words useless, and the High Priest fell back on a method utterly abhorrent to our modern sense of justice—the method of making the prisoner incriminate himself. He asked the plain question and received a plain answer—a little more than he had asked for. The reply of Jesus certainly tends to strengthen the case of those who believe that His thought was largely influenced by the eschatological ideas current in His day. But it is not easy to see where the blasphemy comes in. Hardly in the claim to the Messiahship. Nor would a strictly impartial interpretation of Jesus' quotation from Daniel vii. 13 have been sufficient to sustain this charge. Had the later Christology of the Church been involved in the words of Jesus, there might have been some ground on which to go, but it is most unlikely that this ever entered the minds of the judges. But men in their position were not inclined to be either strict or impartial. They would probably have seen some capital

offence in anything that Jesus said. They had got Him to speak, and any words of His would serve their turn. There may be a faint sarcasm in the language in which Mark records their sentence. They are not said to have condemned Him to death, for that lay outside their power, but to have expressed the opinion that such blasphemy as His was worthy of death—if means could be found to inflict the penalty.

Within sight of the actual judical proceedings there was taking place a far different scene. Peter's denial, again, is one of those events of which the world has long known all that there is to be known. His motive is simple—just fear. Mixed with that is perhaps disappointment. Like others, Peter had expected a sudden, and miraculous divine intervention in aid of Jesus, and it had not come. Instead, He had allowed Himself to be arrested, and was now allowing Himself to be condemned. It would seem that Peter followed partly from affection and partly in the hope of witnessing the great vindication of Jesus. But it did not come. Instead, the Master was condemned and made the sport of cruelty and buffoonery. He might after all be on the wrong side.

The actual criminal trial before Pilate has been expounded and interpreted times without number. All the actors have been studied, alone and in contrast. All have been judged by their attitude to Jesus—priests, people and governor. The essential feature of this trial is that Jesus did to all intents and purposes—as Mark tells the story—plead guilty to the charge brought against Him. After this Pilate, whatever his feelings may have been, had no choice. It is noteworthy that in this Gospel there is no declaration of His innocence on the part of Pilate. He knows that Jesus is formally guilty, and however little the danger he recognises in Him, he is not in a position to acquit Him. Nor does Jesus make any attempt to escape.

There is here no explanation offered of the meaning and character of the kingship which Jesus claims, such as is attributed to Him in the Fourth Gospel. From first to last, except for the two words which admit the charge, Jesus says no word.

It is impossible to miss the import of this attitude. In a very real sense Jesus threw His life away. Though the final stroke of violence which deprived Him of life came from the hands of others, yet it was His own act, calculated and determined, which armed those hands with their destructive power. It is in full accord with the whole of this scene that He is represented elsewhere as saying of His life "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." This was in truth the final purpose that He had set before Himself. His control of events is, indeed, one of the most striking features of the last days. Knowing men as He did, He could use their natural character for His own ends. The treacherous Judas has his place in the designs of Jesus. The cowardly Twelve desert Him, Peter denies Him, all that He may taste human in its supreme bitterness and loneliness. However death may come to us, none of us can say that it is worse than Jesus knew. So with Pilate He had nothing to do. The Roman Governor was no more, in the effective working out of His purpose, than one of the mechanical instruments without which the end could not be achieved. Jesus lived in order to die—at least from the day when Peter acclaimed Him as the Messiah. Only so could He prove to the world, and even to His own loving followers, the true meaning of that Kingdom of His. Let it be clearly understood that this view is very far from exhausting the meaning of the death of Christ. It is probably the most immediate and superficial of all the aspects from which that death may be regarded, but it is certainly one of them, and it is one which springs inevitably out of Mark's whole narrative.

This aspect is in a sense emphasised by the Barabbas incident. The latter was exactly of the type which many, at least, of the Jews expected to see fully exemplified in the Christ. An aggressive and violent patriot, who shrank from nothing in order to achieve his ends, and drive the foreigner from his native land—that was what men sought and what Jesus could not offer them. The contrast between the two is more than the contrast between the innocent and the guilty, it is the contrast which sums up this side of the aim of Jesus, the bringing into the world of a totally new idea of the reign of God. On the one hand stands the ideal of the Kingdom of God as something that comes "with observation," on the other as something that is "within you." Men chose the former, and thereby proved once and for all alike the need for the contrast and the fundamental truth of each to type.

So Jesus was condemned, and then mocked by the soldiers—men who inevitably took the material view. To them it was the finest joke in the world that the title of "King"—and a revolutionary king—should be assumed by a being so feeble, so inept, so utterly deficient in all the qualities needed to make any kind of "show" at the game of rebellion.

This rude jesting is only a short interlude, necessary to bring home the sense of the absolute loneliness of Jesus. Even those who had never seen or heard of Him before were against Him. It is soon over, and the action passes swiftly on. The climax is reached and Jesus is crucified. We need not elaborate the various incidents of the story,—the failing physical frame, collapsing under the weight of the cross, the conspicuous identification with the criminal classes, the mockery of fellow sufferers and onlookers, the proffered refreshment and the torn veil. The central horror lies not in these externals, terrible as they were, it lies in the cry of Jesus. The words, quoted from

Psalm xxii.* were yet uttered not in the original Hebrew, with which Jesus must have been familiar, but in Aramaic, His natural speech. That is to say that they were not mere quotation, they were the expression of His own experience at the moment. That experience is utterly beyond our power of appreciation. Jesus had lived all His life without a moment of conscious separation from His Father. Even in the garden the agony had not broken the thread of communion. The presence, sympathy and love of His Father had been the fundamental fact of life to Him, the ultimate reality of experience. And now it was gone. It is this which gives the death of Jesus its meaning. It is not merely the physical suffering nor the degradation nor the desolation and withdrawal of all human sympathy—others have borne such things. To Jesus alone, as far as our record of man's spiritual life goes, was it given to live all His life in an unwavering faith and communion with God, and suddenly to find in the last hour, when the need for God was at its highest, when everything else had failed, that God Himself too had vanished from the field of experience.

This is no place to attempt to sketch, still less to construct, a theology of the Cross. Nevertheless one thing must be said. If the death of Jesus, as Mark describes it, were merely the end of His life, and nothing more, then ethical values cease to exist. Either this appalling spiritual tragedy has a further meaning, which will in the end give a fuller light on God's dealings with man, or we must abandon as an exquisite mirage the dream of a righteous and a loving God. Here there can be no middle course. If one finds mere historical events in the life of Jesus, His death will explosively shatter the moral world about one. That a life of perfect goodness should close in physical and social disaster is not wholly unexpected ; that it should close

* See J. R. Coates' "The Christ of Revolution."

in the lowest abyss of spiritual despair would mean that goodness was a complete failure, and that not God but the devil is supreme. Jesus had consistently lived for the Kingdom of God. He had seen that it was not of this world, and was only to be won through His own suffering. But if that suffering merely meant His desertion by God, then the Kingdom itself was a delusion. He had lived for a phantom and died for a dream. Once more, this is not the place to trespass on the province of the theologian and attempt to offer a doctrine of the "work of Christ," but it is inevitable that one should realise that room should be found in one's own thinking and experience for such a doctrine, whatever be its detailed form. We are faced with two alternatives and two only. Either God is not what we thought Him, i.e., God as Jesus understood Him does not exist, or there is some supreme revelation of Him in this fact which we may not perhaps fathom but which we are compelled to acknowledge. We may admire His character and life, we may value His teaching and example, but His death is a supreme challenge to a reasoned faith and a willed recognition of Jesus as Lord, Saviour and God.

To us—as Mark tells the story—there is in the burial a sense of waiting. There is a quietness and a hush about the whole. To the minor actors in the drama there was doubtless a numb hopelessness—especially in the case of the women. But to us who read it is not possible to avoid the conviction that this is but an interlude—sad, but yet peaceful. The poignant agony of the last hour is past, and neither the human mind nor the human body can remain conscious of acute suffering for an indefinite time. Once more, there will come, when this numbness has worn off, the recognition of the moral and spiritual implication of the death of Jesus, and the men will be driven into the despair of blank atheism—*unless something happens.* Such an

attitude of mind cannot fall upon us all at once. The life and spirit of Jesus have taught us at least something of that supreme faith of His in a Heavenly Father. We instinctively—perhaps unconsciously—cling to the belief that something *will* happen. So the Passover Sabbath is a day of peaceful sadness rather than of tragic sorrow.

And something *does* happen. The loving tenderness of the women took them to the grave to embalm, as best they might, the body of Him whom they had loved. It is not necessary to dwell on their anxiety or on the person they actually found there or other details. The stupendous fact is that they found the grave empty. Jesus was not there, and instead of the dead body they found the assurance that He was not dead but alive. Here the actual Gospel of Mark breaks off, xvi. 9-16 are a compilation from other sources designed to take the place of pages lost very early from the Gospel. But there is no reason to doubt that the substance of the missing pages is represented in the close of the Gospel according to Matthew, and may be studied there by those who wish to have the complete story.

But for us the supreme fact is that Jesus is not dead. This in itself is a complete reversal of the situation. Jesus died—and lives, by that death and by that life transforming character and outlook for those who had experience of both facts. There *was* something more in the death of Jesus than the mere end of His life. Out of apparent failure had come the truest success, out of apparent defeat the most perfect triumph. Entering into the double experience the men and women of Jesus found the truth of the Kingdom. It has been said many times that the perfect evidence for the Resurrection is found in the Church. We may go further and say that it is found in every one for whom and in whom Jesus lives.

Questions on Chapter VIII

1. Can " waste " be justified on grounds of " sentiment " ?
2. What view do you take of the treachery of Judas ?
3. What do you think Jesus meant by His words at the Supper ?
4. If you had been in Peter's place, would you have denied Jesus ?
5. Is anyone ever justified in " throwing his life away " ?
6. What does the death of Jesus mean to *you* ?

A NOTE ON MIRACLES

In discussing the miracles recorded in the Gospel of Mark, it must always be remembered that the age in which the book was written firmly believed in the possibility of what we call miracles—i.e., the achievements of results which we cannot refer to any known law or normal phenomenon—and expected them. There is always, then, the possibility that what is recorded so as to appear miraculous may have taken place in a way which we should to-day understand and appreciate. The explanation would have been simple to us, but it was not so to the ancient world, and therefore in recording they made it seem to their reader—as it seemed to them—a miracle.

This consideration applies with varying force to the different types of miracle which may be distinguished. Roughly speaking there are three of these. The first type are the miracles of exorcism, the casting out of devils. In many cases the symptoms indicate what would to-day be called either epilepsy or extreme forms of hysteria. Here it is easy to understand that a powerful personality could, by means of "suggestion" effect a cure, especially when it is remembered that the patient as well as the exorcist and all about them were agreed in their view of the source of the trouble. If a man really believes himself to be inhabited or possessed by devils, it is easy to understand how a person of authority could make him believe, by adopting the man's own view of the case and ordering the devil to depart, that he was cured.

A second type is the cure of disease. It is becoming more and more realised that there is a spiritual element

in the cure of many diseases, and not a few medical men insist that their work is very much easier when they have the confidence and moral co-operation of the patient, or perhaps of others. Of course, in our experience there are limits to which this principle can be applied, and there are innumerable instances in which the actual physical damage done by disease is so great that the normal man's spiritual energy is utterly inadequate to meet or repair it. Lungs largely destroyed by tubercle would be a case in point. But granted so unique a spiritual power as that of Jesus, based, as it was, on His sinless life and maintained by His unbroken communion with His Heavenly Father, one does not see why there should be limits set to the possibilities of the spiritual element in the cure of disease.

The third outstanding type is that of the so-called "nature miracles"—the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the water and similar events. In many quarters there will doubtless be a tendency to "explain them away" on lines suggested above. It has been supposed for instance, that in the case of the miraculous feeding of crowds, what Jesus did was to set the example of forming and distributing a common stock from the small portions that different people had with them. The "miracle" would thus lie again on the side of personality, a magnetism which could impel men to share what they had, and an organising genius which could arrange for its adequate distribution. Such an event, it is argued, would appeal to those present as being very wonderful, and, as the tale was handed down from mouth to mouth it would assume a form in which Jesus Himself practically created the meal.

There will be others, who, like the present writer, while not seeking to lay any burden on the faith of those who find such a view the only possible one, yet feel that it does not account for the facts, and that in dealing with a historian of such ability and care as Mark,

one must be extremely chary of allowing oneself to detract in any way from the real historicity of the events which he relates. To such it may seem preferable to accept these stories as they stand, recognising in Jesus a person so unique that He had powers beyond the reach of ordinary men, and a control over the physical world which others have not possessed.

In discussing the miracles of Jesus, the following points should be borne in mind :—

1. The miraculous element is inextricably woven into the texture of the Gospels.
2. The miracles form part of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. They are not mere "wonder-stories," but harmonise with the teaching and character of our Lord.
3. The Jewish authorities were not convinced by the recorded miracles of the validity of the claims of Jesus ; and He refused to give them the "signs" which they demanded.
4. It is important to give due weight to the fact that on certain contemporaries Jesus made such an impression that they believed He could do what God could do.

In conclusion it may be noted that to the modern mind miracles have practically no "apologetic" value. We should not admit a man's claim to be superhuman on the ground that he could do things which we could neither do nor understand. Their value to us, if we accept them in full the sense, is that they add to the picture of Jesus, carrying into unusual realms the power of that amazing personality which for authority and dynamic has never been equalled in the world's history. To one in whom "the full content of God dwelt in bodily form," such acts were natural.

The following books are suggested for further reading on the subject of miracles :—

A Handbook of Christian Apologetics. A. E. Garvie. Duckworth. (Chapter 3, Section 3.)

Miracles : Papers and Sermons contributed to *The Guardian,* by Lock, Sanday, Headlam, etc. Longmans Green.

Christianity in the Modern World. D. S. Cairns. Hodder and Stoughton (Chapter 5.)

The Open Light. N. Micklem. Swarthmore Press.

DATE DUE

68,130

BS
2585.3
.R6
c.2

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
3 0645 1000 0648 1